

# SELECTED POEMS OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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## PREFACE

IN making this collection, which is intended primarily for school use, we have tried to keep three things in view. The poems chosen should exhibit Matthew Arnold's special qualities; they should not, in subject or in treatment, be such as the young could not appreciate, and they should give pupils something to think about in connexion with other poetry and other subjects of study. Poems like *Mycerinus* and *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, fine as they are, hardly answer the second test. The short lyrics, as is natural with poems of that type, are noteworthy rather for beauty of expression than for substance.

*Sohrab and Rustum* and *Balder Dead*, the first poems in our selection, being avowedly modelled on Homer, we have thought it useful to quote in illustration a few passages of which the imitation is specially close. These are taken mainly from the *Iliad*, and for the translations we have relied on the prose version published by Messrs Lang, Leaf & Myers.

*Balder Dead* has been chosen largely because it gives a good sketch of the Norse mythology as a whole, though, as is pointed out in the Introduction, it is imbued with a different feeling. The spirit of the

Norse mythology is very different from that of the Greek. It is purer and, if the phrase may be allowed, less selfish but it is fiercer, and brings the gods nearer to the likeness of men in their origin and destiny. Doubtless it has influenced the thought of mankind in general much less but seeing what important elements the Norse peoples have contributed to the English race, the ideas which dominated them in their primitive state are of real interest to ourselves.



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## INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW ARNOLD was born at Laleham in 1822, and was the eldest son of the famous Dr Arnold, afterwards Head Master of Rugby School. In 1836 he was sent to Winchester, and a year later he entered Rugby. In 1841 he gained a scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. His poem on Cromwell won the Newdigate Prize, and in 1845 he obtained a Fellowship at Oriel. For a short time he was an Assistant Master at Rugby. This post he resigned in order to become Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne, who appointed him to an Inspectorship of Schools, and this office he held for thirty-five years. He died suddenly in 1888.

His poetry belongs to the earlier half of his life, for after 1867 he practically wrote verse no more. Henceforth he wrote for an ever-increasing and appreciative public those critical studies in life and literature by which he is perhaps best known. The *Essays in Criticism* and *Culture and Anarchy* delighted thousands of readers, who were bored by *Empedocles*, and only mildly interested in *Balder*. 'From first to last he was a critic,' and we may trace in his poems the tendency which led him to formulate at a later period his famous and much-disputed definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life.'

HIS first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems, by A*, appeared in 1849, and *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems, by A*, in 1852. They had no great success, though *The Strayed Reveller*, with its pictures of the doings of men as seen by the gods, is one of his most delightful poems. The others are full of the strain and weariness of life. The times are out of joint, and he has none of the energy and hopefulness which could make him try to set them right. Writing of Wordsworth, in 1850, he says:

He too upon a wintry clime  
Had fallen—on this iron time  
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.

Life must be endured by ‘drugging pain with patience’.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls who weigh  
Life well and find it wanting, nor deploie;  
But in disdainful silence turn away,  
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more?

O! do I wait to hear some grey-han’d king  
Unravel all his many-colour’d lore,  
Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,  
Mused much, loved life a little, loathed it more?

As Mr. Stopford Brooke says ‘He had insight into the evils, the dullness, the follies, the decay and death of the time at which he wrote, but he had little insight into its good, into the hopes and ideas which were arising in its darkness, or the life which was collecting itself together under its decay. His temper, therefore, was not joyous, nor was it in sympathy with the temper of the whirling but formative time in which he began and continued to write poetry’

These early poems are curiously middle-aged their despair and discontent are not the despair and discontent of youth—the sudden overclouding of a spring day—but the fixed steady gloo of November. They are generally written with effort, the poet is never carried out of himself and h melancholy All the self-restraint and moderation which are so attractive

his prose writing are so much dead-weight in poetry. There is too much ‘sad lucidity of soul’

*Empedocles on Ætna* is a failure, with the exception of two or three purple patches—especially the Cadmus and Harmonia passage, and the lovely lyric at the end.

Not here, O Apollo!  
Aie haunts meet for thee  
But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea

.

First hymn they the Father  
Of all things, and then  
The rest of Immortals,  
The action of men

The Day in its hotness,  
The strife with the palm,  
The Night in its silence,  
The Stars in their calm

Here again, as in the last lines of *Sohn ab and Rustum*, the human tragedy is ‘rounded with’ the peace of Nature

In 1853 a new edition of the poems appeared, in which *Empedocles* was left out In an interesting preface Matthew Arnold explains the reason of this omission

'I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musæus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun to change      What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity, have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced, modern problems have presented themselves, we hear already of the doubts, we witness the discouragement of Hamlet and of Faust . Any accurate representation (of such a man's feelings) may therefore be expected to be interesting, but if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspire and rejoice the reader that it shall convey a charm and infuse delight. For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be "a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares", and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness.' In 1867 *Empedocles*, at the request of Robert Browning, was included in the collected edition of his poems.

In the same preface, which should be read in its entirety by all lovers of poetry, he deals with the question of subject. 'What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times? They are actions, human actions, possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet.      What

actions are the most excellent? Those certainly which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections, to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race and which are independent of time. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting, and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido — what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an “exhausted past”? . I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *Jocelyn*, *The Excursion*, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad*, by the *Oresteia*, by the episode of Dido. And why is this? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense, and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone. It has been said that I wish to limit the poet in his choice of subjects to Greek and Roman antiquity, but it is not so. I only counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions, without regarding to what time they belong.

In accordance with these ideas he turned to the great stories of the past, *Sohnab and Rustum*, one of his finest poems, appeared in the 1853 volume. It is an old, old story, and is found not only in the East but among Teutonic and Celtic peoples. There is an air of great dignity and restraint about the whole poem, and the geographical names have been used in the Miltonic manner. Here, as in *Balder*, the similes are overdone,

there is too much deliberate imitation of Homer, with the result that the Oriental story is half-Hellenized. But the last two hundred lines are in the poet's best manner. the recognition scene is described in lines of great stateliness, simplicity, and beauty

But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
And full of blood and battles is my age,  
And I shall never end this life of blood.

Here is the ever-recurring note in Arnold's poetry—the longing for peace and rest in the midst of conflict. Neither he nor his heroes ever 'taste the joy of battle with their peers'.

*Balder Dead* is much less interesting and is far too long. In a letter written to Palgrave in 1869, Matthew Arnold says '*Balder* perhaps no one cares much for except myself, but I have always thought, though very likely I am wrong, that it has not had justice done to it. I consider that it has a natural propriety of diction and rhythm which is what we all prize so much in Vergil, and which is not common in English poetry. . . We have enough Scandinavianism in our nature and history to make a short *conspectus* of the Scandinavian mythology admissible'

Balder is a conspectus of Scandinavian mythology, but the poet has quite missed the Scandinavian spirit. he had no real sympathy with nor understanding of the barbaric delight in blood and battle, the fierce loves and hates, which are of the essence of the Northern sagas, and into which William Morris entered so deeply. His own dominant feeling is again expressed in Balder's words to Hermod



For I am long since weary of your storm  
 Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life  
 Something too much of war and broils which make  
 Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.  
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail,  
 Mine ears are stunn'd with blows and sick for calm

But it is in his elegiac poems that he is at his best  
*The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis* are great poetry after  
 the order of *Lycidas*. In them the deficiencies of his  
 temperament are not felt. They are full of tenderness  
 and charm, penetrated by the beauty of 'that sweet  
 city with her dreaming spires' which he loved so well,  
 full of lovely little descriptions of natural things:

So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
 From the wet field, through the next garden trees,  
 Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze

Or,

Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
 And open jasmine-muffled lattices,  
 And groups under the dreaming garden trees,  
 And the full moon, and the white evening star

In that noble poem *Rugby Chapel* there are two haunting  
 lines of almost Vergilian poignancy and pathos

And through thee I believe  
 In the noble and great who are gone:  
 Pure souls honour'd and blest  
 By former ages, who else—  
 Such, so soulless, so poor,  
 Is the race of men whom I see—  
*Seem'd but a dream of the heart,*  
*Seem'd but a cry of desire*

Here and there in the elegiac poems are those  
 delightful appreciations, which are at once poetry and

criticism In *Haworth Churchyard* all there is to say of Emily Bronte is contained in these lines

Whose soul  
Knew no fellow for might,  
Passion, vehemence, grief,  
Daring, since Byron died,  
That world famed son of fire— she, who sank  
Baffled, unknown, self consumed,  
Whose too bold dying song  
Stirr'd like a clarion-blast my soul

o again in the *Lines on the Author of 'Obermann'*

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken  
From half of human fate,  
And Goethe's course few sons of men  
May think to emulate

For he pursued a lonely road,  
His eyes on Nature's plan,  
Neither a man too much a god,  
Nor God too much a man

And in the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*

What helps it now that Byron bore,  
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,  
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore  
The pageant of his bleeding heart?

And last and best of all, in *Heine's Grave*

Shakespeare! loveliest of souls,  
Peerless in radiance, in joy!

It is in this poem that the famous and much quoted lines on England occur:

She,  
The weary Titan, with deaf  
Ears and labour dimm'd eyes,  
Regarding neither to right  
Nor left, goes passively by,  
Staggering on to her goal,

Bearing on shoulders immense,  
 Atlantean, the load,  
 Well-nigh not to be borne,  
 Of the too vast orb of her fate

and in *A Southern Night* the equally well-known lines  
 on the English

In cities should we English lie,  
 Where cities are rising ever new,  
 And men's incessant stream goes by  
 We who pursue

Our business with unslackening stride,  
 Traverse in troops, with care fill'd breast,  
 The soft Mediterranean side,  
 The Nile, the East,

And see all sights from Pole to Pole,  
 And glance, and nod and bustle by,  
 And never once possess our soul  
 Before we die

and in *Obermann once more*

The brooding East with awe beheld  
 Her impious younger world,  
 The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,  
 And on her head was hurl'd

The East bowed low before the blast  
 In patient deep disdain,  
 She let the legions thunder past,  
 And plunged in thought again

Much of Arnold's youth was passed in the Lake  
 Country, where his father had a country house, and in  
 a very real sense he is 'of the lineage of Wordsworth'  
 His descriptions of Nature are careful, though they  
 lack the minuteness of observation which is so  
 conspicuous in Tennyson To quote again from Mr.

Stopford Brooke ✓ He describes the thing he sees, flower or bird, stream or hill, exactly as they are, without humanizing them, without veiling them with any sentiment of their own, without having concerning them any philosophy that spiritualizes Nature as the form of Thought or Love, any belief that she is alive or dwelt in by living beings. Nature to Arnold is frequently the nature that modern science has revealed to us—matter in motion, taking an inconceivable variety of form, but always in its variety acting rigidly according to certain ways, which, for want of a wiser term, we call laws. For the first time this view of Nature enters into English poetry with Arnold. He sees the loveliness of her doings, but he also sees their terror and dreadfulness and their relentlessness.<sup>1</sup> But, what in his poetry he chiefly sees is the peace of Nature's obedience to law—the everlasting youth of her unchanging life. And again 'He was not faithful to the scientific view of her. His conception of her wavered with his mood. He sometimes, in a sort of reversion to Wordsworth, speaks of her as powerful to help him.' For instance in 'Parting'

Blow, ye winds! lift me with you,  
I come to the wild  
Fold closely, O Nature!  
Thine arms round thy child

To thee only God granted  
A heart ever new  
To all always open,  
To all always true

<sup>1</sup> This view of Nature is also found in Tennyson, *In Memoriam* has many instances

Ah! calm me! restore me!  
And dry up my tears  
On thy high mountain-platforms,  
Where Morn first appears,  
Where the white mists, for ever,  
Are spread and upfurl'd,  
In the stir of the forces  
Whence issued the world

We are, of course,\* much too near to Matthew Arnold to assign to him his true place in English poetry, but we may safely say that though he is 'the poet of a backwater' and extraordinarily unequal, yet he is a genuine poet whose work we shall not willingly let perish. He will always find audience and few, among those who are struggling in doubt and uncertainty, and to whom the noble Stoic attitude to life and its problems, which we find in some of his finer poems, specially appeals, when the stars are gone out, and the Heavens are as brass above them. He, too,

Breathes, when he will, immortal air,  
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.



## I

## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,  
 And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream  
 But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
 Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep  
 Sohrab alone, he slept not all night long  
 He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed,  
 But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,  
 He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,  
 And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,  
 And went abroad into the cold wet fog. 10

Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent  
 Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood  
 Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand  
 Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamerie  
 Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,  
 And to a hillock came, a little back  
 From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat  
 Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land  
 The men of former times had crown'd the top 20  
 With a clay fort but that was fallen, and now  
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread  
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
 Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,  
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms  
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step

Was dull'd, for he slept light, an old man's sleep,  
And he rose quickly on one aim, and said — 30

'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn  
Speak' is there news, or any night alarm?'

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said —

'Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa it is I  
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe  
Sleep, but I sleep not, all night long I lie  
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee  
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek

Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,  
In Samarcand, before the army march'd ✓ 40

And I will tell thee what my heart desires  
Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first  
I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,  
I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,  
At my boy's years, the courage of a man  
This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on  
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
And beat the Persians back on every field,  
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—

Rustum, my father, who, I hop'd, should greet, 50

Should one day greet upon some well-fought field  
His not unworthy, not inglorious son  
So I long hop'd, but him I never find  
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask  
Let the two armies rest to-day but I  
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
To meet me, man to man if I prevail,  
Rustum will surely hear it, if I fall—

Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin  
Dim is the rumour of a common fight, 60  
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk  
But of a single combat fame speaks clear'

He spoke and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said —



'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !  
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
And share the battle's common chance with us  
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,  
In single fight incurring single risk,  
To find a father thou hast never seen ? 70  
That were far best, my son, to stay with us  
Unmurmuring, in our tents, while it is war,  
And when 'tis truce, then in Ahasiab's towns  
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,  
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight  
Seek him in peace, and carry to his aims,  
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !  
But far hence seek him, for he is not here  
For now it is not as when I was young,  
When Rustum was in front of every fray 80  
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old  
Whether that his own mighty strength at last  
Feels the abhor'd approaches of old age,  
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King  
There go —Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes  
Danger or death awaits thee on this field  
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost  
To us fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
To seek thy father, not seek single fights 90  
In vain —but who can keep the lion's cub  
From ravening ? and who govern Rustum's son ?  
Go I will grant thee what thy heart desires '  
So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,  
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword,  
And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap, 100

Black, glossy, cul'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul,  
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd ✓  
 His herald to his side, and went abroad  
 The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog  
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd  
 Into the open plain, so Haman bade,  
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd  
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime  
 From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd  
 As when, some grey November morn, the files, 111  
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,  
 Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes  
 Of Elburz, from the Aialian estuaries,  
 Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian sea-board so they stream'd  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
 First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears,  
 Large men, large steeds, who from Bokhara come  
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares 120  
 Next the more temperate Tookmuns of the south,  
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
 And those from Attuck and the Caspian sands,  
 Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink  
 The acid milk of camels, and their wells  
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd,  
 The Tartars of Feighana, from the banks  
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards  
 And close-set skull-caps, and those wilder hordes 130  
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,  
 Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kughuzzes,  
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere  
 These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.  
 And on the other side the Persians form'd

First a light cloud of hoise, Tartars they seem'd,  
 The Ilyats of Khorassan and behind,  
 The loyal troops of Persia, hoise and foot,  
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel 140  
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came  
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks  
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood  
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said —  
 'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear! 150  
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day  
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man'

As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
 When the dew glistens on the pealed ears,  
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—  
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd  
 But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool, 160  
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow,  
 Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
 Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—  
 In single file they move, and stop then breath,  
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—  
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up 170  
 To counsel Guduiz and Zoraiah came,  
 And Ferabuz, who rul'd the Persian host

Second, and was the uncle of the Kirg  
 These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said  
 'Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart  
 But Rustum came last night, aloof he sits  
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart  
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear 180  
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name  
 Haply he will forget his wiath, and fight  
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up'

So spake he, and Ferood stood forth and said —  
 'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said  
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man'

He spoke, and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode  
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent  
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,  
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd, 190  
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents  
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
 Just pitch'd the high pavilion in the midst  
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around  
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found  
 Rustum his morning meal was done, but still  
 The table stood beside him, charg'd with food,  
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
 And dark green melons, and there Rustum sate  
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist, 200  
 And play'd with it, but Gudurz came and stood  
 Before him, and he look'd, and saw him stand,  
 And with a ciz spiang up, and dropp'd the bird,  
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said —  
 'Welcome' these eyes could see no better sight  
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink'  
 But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said —  
 'Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,

But not to-day to-day has other needs  
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze 210  
 For from the Taitais is a challenge brought  
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—  
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid  
 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart  
 And he is young and Iran's chiefs are old,  
 Or else too weak, and all eyes turn to thee  
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose'

He spoke but Rustum answer'd with a smile — 220  
 'Go to' if Iran's chiefs are old, then I  
 Am older if the young are weak, the King  
 Errs strangely for the King, for Kai Khosroo,  
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,  
 And lets the aged moulden to their graves  
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—  
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I  
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?  
 For would that I myself had such a son,  
 And not that one slight helpless gul I have, 230  
 A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war  
 And I to tarry with the snow-ban'd Zal,  
 My father whom the robber Afghans vex,  
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,  
And he has none to guard his weak old age  
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,  
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,  
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,  
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,  
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings, 240  
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more'

He spoke, and smil'd, and Gudurz made reply —  
 'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,  
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks

Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
 Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,  
*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,*  
*And shuns to peril it with younger men'*

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply —  
 'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words? 250  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say  
 What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,  
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?  
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?  
 But who for men of nought would do great deeds?  
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame  
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain aims,  
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
 In single fight with any mortal man'

He spoke, and frown'd, and Gudurz turn'd, and ran 260  
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,  
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came  
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd  
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,  
 And clad himself in steel the arms he chose  
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,  
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
 And from the fluted spine atop a plume  
 Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume  
 So arm'd he issued forth, and Ruksh, his horse, 270  
 Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,  
 Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,  
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once  
 Did in Bokhara by the river find  
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
 And rear'd him, a bright bay, with lofty crest,  
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broder'd green  
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were walk'd  
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know  
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd 280

The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd  
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
 Hail'd, but the Tartars knew not who he was  
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,  
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,  
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—  
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came 290

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,  
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came  
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe  
 Down through the middle of a rich man's coin,  
 And on each side are squares of standing coin,  
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare,  
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand  
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw 300  
 Sohrab come forth, and ey'd him as he came

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—  
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—  
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
 Of that poor drudge may be, so Rustum ey'd  
 The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar  
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying foith 310  
 All the most valiant chiefs long he peus'd  
His spouted air, and wonder'd who he was  
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd  
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,

By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—  
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd  
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul  
As he beheld him coming, and he stood, 320  
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said —

'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,  
 And warm, and pleasant, but the grave is cold  
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave  
 Behold me I am vast, and clad in iron,  
 And tried, and I have stood on many a field  
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe  
 Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd  
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?  
 Be govern'd quit the Tartar host, and come 330  
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
 And fight beneath my banner till I die  
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou'

So he spake, mildly • Sohrab heard his voice,  
 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw  
 His giant figure planted on the sand,  
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
 Has bullded on the waste in former years  
 Against the robbers, and he saw that head,  
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs hope fill'd his soul, 340  
 And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,  
 And clasp'd his hand within his own and said —  
 'Oh, by thy father's head' by thine own soul'  
 Art thou not Rustum? Speak' art thou not he?'

But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,  
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul —  
 'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean  
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys  
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,  
 And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*— 350  
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,  
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,



And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,  
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way  
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,  
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—  
“I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd  
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
To cope with me in single fight, but they  
Shank, only Rustum dar'd then he and I 360  
Chang'd gifts, and went on equal terms away”  
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud  
Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me'

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud —  
'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd  
By challenge forth make good thy vaunt, or yield  
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?  
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee  
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand 370  
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,  
There would be then no talk of fighting more  
But being what I am, I tell thee this,  
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul  
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield,  
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,  
Oxus in summer wash them all away'

He spoke and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet —  
'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fight me so 380  
I am no girl, to be made pale by words  
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
Here on this field, there were no fighting then  
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here  
Begin thou art more vast, more dread than I,  
And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young—  
But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven  
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure

Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know  
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea, 390  
Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,  
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall  
And whether it will heave us up to land,  
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
We know not, and no search will make us know.  
Only the event will teach us in its hour'

He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd  
His spear down from the shoulder, down it came,  
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk 400  
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds  
Drops like a plummet Sohrab saw it come,  
And sprang aside, quick as a flash the spear  
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,  
Which it sent flying wide — then Sohrab threw  
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield sharp rang,  
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear  
And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he  
Could wield an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,  
Still rough, like those which men in treeless plains 410  
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up  
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time  
Has made in Himalayan forests wick,  
And strewn the channels with torn boughs, so huge  
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
One stroke, but again Sohrab sprang aside  
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came  
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand  
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420  
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand  
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,  
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay  
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand

But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bai'd his sword,  
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said —

'Thou strik'st too hard that club of thine will float  
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones  
But rise, and be not wroth, not wroth am I  
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul 430  
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum be it so  
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?  
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too,  
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,  
And heard their hollow roar of dying men,  
But never was my heart thus touch'd before  
Are they from Heaven, these softening of the heart?  
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!  
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,  
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand, 440  
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,  
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds  
There are enough foes in the Persian host  
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang,  
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
Mayst fight, fight them, when they confront thy spear  
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!'

He ceas'd but while he spake, Rustum had risen,  
And stood erect, trembling with rage his club  
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear, 450  
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand  
Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,  
The baleful sign of fevers dust had soil'd  
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms  
His breast heav'd, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice  
Was chok'd with rage at last these words broke way —

'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!  
Curl'd minion, dancer, corner of sweet words!  
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!  
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now 460

With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance,  
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
Of battle, and with me, who make no play  
Of war I fight it out, and hand to hand  
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!  
Remember all thy valour try thy feints  
And cunning all the pity I had is gone  
Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts  
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles'

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts, 470  
And he too drew his sword at once they rush'd  
Together, as two eagles on one prey  
Come rushing down together from the clouds,  
One from the east, one from the west their shields  
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
Of hewing axes, crashing trees such blows  
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd  
And you would say that sun and stars took part 480  
In that unnatural conflict, for a cloud  
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun  
Over the fighters' head, and a wind rose  
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,  
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair  
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone,  
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream  
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes 490  
And labouring breath, first Rustum struck the shield  
Which Sohrab held stiff out the steel-spik'd spear  
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan  
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
Nor clove its steel quite through, but all the crest

He shone away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
 Never till now defil'd, sank to the dust,  
 And Rustum bow'd his head, but then the gloom  
 Grew blacker    thunder rumbled in the air,    500  
 And lightnings rent the cloud, and Ruksh, the hoise,  
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry  
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
 Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,  
 And comes at night to die upon the sand —  
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,  
 And Oxus curdl'd as it cross'd his stream  
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
 And struck again, and again Rustum bow'd    510  
 His head, but this time all the blade, like glass,  
 Spang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
 And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone  
 Then Rustum rais'd his head    his dreadful eyes  
 Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
 And shouted *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that shout,  
 And shrank amaz'd    back he recoil'd one step,  
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form  
 And then he stood bewilder'd, and he dropp'd  
 His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side    520  
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground  
 And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,  
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
 The cloud, and the two armies saw the pair,  
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand  
 Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began —  
 'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill  
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,  
 And bear thy trophies to Afiasiab's tent    530  
 Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move

His heart to take a gift, and let thee go  
 And then that all the Tartar host would praise  
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,  
 To glad thy father in his weak old age  
 Fool' thou art slain, and by an unknown man'  
 Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,  
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old'

And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied — 540  
 'Unknown thou art, yet thy fierce vaunt is vain  
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!  
 No' Rustum slays me, and this filial heart  
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,  
 And I were he who till to-day I was,  
 They should be lying here, I standing there  
 But that beloved name unnerv'd my aim—  
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
 Fall, and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe 550  
 And now thou boastest and insult'st my fate  
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear!  
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!  
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!'

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
 And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,  
 And follow'd her to find out where she fell 560  
 Far off,—anon her mate comes winging back  
 From hunting, and a great way off descends  
 His huddling young left sole, at that, he checks  
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps  
 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
 Chiding his mate back to her nest, but she  
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,

A heap of fluttering feathers never more  
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it, 570  
Never the black and dripping precipices  
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by —  
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—  
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood  
Over his dying son, and knew him not

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said —  
'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?  
The mighty Rustum never had a son'

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied —  
'Ah yes, he had' and that lost son am I 580  
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,  
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and taries long,  
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here,  
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap  
'To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee  
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son'  
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!  
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!  
Yet him I pity not so much, but hei,

My mother, who in Aderbaijan dwells 590  
With that old king, her father, who grows grey  
With age, and rules over the valiant Kooids  
Her most I pity, who no more will see  
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,  
With spoils and honour, when the war is done  
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,  
From tribe to tribe, until it reach hei ear,  
And then will that defenceless woman learn  
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,  
But that in battle with a nameless foe, 600  
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain'

He spoke, and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,  
Thinking of hei he left, and his own death  
He spoke, but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought

Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew,  
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all  
     that sad mother sent him word, for fear      610  
 Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms,  
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son,  
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame  
 So deem'd he, yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought,  
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
 At the full moon    tears gathered in his eyes,  
 For he remembered his own early youth,  
 And all its bounding rapture, as, at dawn,      620  
 The shepherd from his mountain lodge descends  
 A fair bright city, smitten by the sun,  
 Through many rolling clouds,—so Rustum saw  
 His youth, saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom,  
 And that old king, her father, who lov'd well  
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
 With joy, and all the pleasant life they led,  
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—  
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills      630  
 In Ader-baijan    And he saw that Youth,  
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
 Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe  
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,  
 Mowing the garden grass plots near its bed,  
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,  
 On the mown, dying grass,—so Sohrab lay,  
 Lovely in death upon the common sand.  
 And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said — 640



'O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son  
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd !  
 Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
 Have told thee false,—thou art not Rustum's son.  
 For Rustum had no son one child he had—  
 But one—a girl who with her mother now  
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—  
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war'

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath, for now  
 The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce, 650  
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die,  
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe—  
 And rising steinly on one arm, he said —

'Man, who art thou who dost deny my words ?  
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
 And falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine  
 I tell thee prick'd upon this arm I bear  
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,  
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore' 660  
 He spoke and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,  
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand  
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
 That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud  
 And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said —

'Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie  
 If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son'

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd  
 His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm, 670  
 And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
 Prick'd as a cunning workman, in Pekin,  
 Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
 An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,  
 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands —

So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal  
 It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,  
 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die, 680  
 A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks  
 Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—  
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign  
 And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,  
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,  
 And then he touch'd it with his hand and said —  
 'How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign  
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other 'man's?'

He spoke but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood  
 Speechless, and then he utter'd one sharp cry— 690  
*O boy—thy father!*—and his voice choked there  
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,  
 And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth  
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast  
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
 And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,  
 Trying to call him back to life and life  
 Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes  
 And they stood wide with horror, and he seiz'd  
 In both his hands the dust which lay around, 700  
 And threw it on his head, and smutch'd his hair,  
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms  
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,  
 And his sobs chok'd him, and he clutch'd his sword,  
 To draw it, and for ever let life out  
 But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,  
 And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said —  
 'Father, forbear for I but meet to day  
 The doom that at my birth was written down  
 In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand 710  
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
 When first I saw thee, and thy heart spoke too,

I know it but Fate trod those promptings down  
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engag'd  
The strife and hurl'd me on my father's spear.  
But let us speak no more of this I find  
My father, let me feel that I have found.  
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
And wash them with thy tears, and say, "My son!" 720  
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,  
And swift, for like the lightning to this field  
I came, and like the wind I go away—

Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind  
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be'  
So said he and his voice releas'd the heart  
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth, he cast  
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
And kiss'd him And awe fell on both the hosts  
When they saw Rustum's grief and Ruksh, the horse, 730  
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane  
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe  
First to the one then to the other mov'd  
His head, as if enquiring what their grief  
Might mean, and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand  
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said —

'Ruksh, now thou grieve'st, but, O Ruksh, thy feet  
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,  
When first they bore thy master to this field' 740

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—  
'Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,  
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed'  
My terrible father's terrible horse, and said,  
That I should one day find thy lord and thee  
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane  
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I,  
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,

And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home  
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan, 750  
 And seen the river of Helmund, and the lake  
 Of Zurrah, and the aged Zal himself  
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,  
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
 And said—"O Ruksh' bear Rustum well"—but I  
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream  
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen  
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand, 760  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the black Toorkmun tents, and only drunk  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
 The northern Su, and this great Oxus stream—  
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die'  
 And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied —  
 'Oh that its waves were flowing over me'  
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!' 770  
 And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied —  
 'Desire not that, my father, thou must live  
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die  
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
 And reap a second glory in thine age  
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
 But come thou seest this great host of men  
 Which follow me, I pray thee, slay not these  
 Let me entreat for them what have they done? 780  
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star  
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace  
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,  
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,

And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,  
Thou, and the snow-hau'd Zal, and all thy friends  
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all.

That so the passing horseman on the waste 790  
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—  
*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,*  
*Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—*  
And I be not forgotten in my grave'

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied —  
'Fear not, as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,  
So shall it be for I will burn my tents,  
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,  
And carry thee away to Seistan,

And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee, 800  
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends  
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all  
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave  
And I will spare thy host yea, let them go  
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace  
What should I do with slaying any more?

For would that all whom I have ever slain  
Might be once more alive, my bitterest foes, 810  
And they who were call'd champions in their time,  
And through whose death I won that fame I have,  
And I were nothing but a common man,  
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,  
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!  
Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
Not thou of mine, and I might die, not thou,  
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan, 820

And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine,  
 And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,  
 For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end —*  
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
 And full of blood and battles is my age,  
 And I shall never end this life of blood'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied —  
 'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man'  
 But thou shalt yet have peace, only not now,  
 Not yet but thou shalt have it on that day, 830  
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,  
 Thou and the other peers of Kar-Khosroo,  
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,  
 From laying thy dear master in his grave'

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said —  
 'Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea'  
 Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure'

He spoke, and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took  
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd  
 His wound's imperious anguish but the blood 840  
 Came welling from the open gash, and life  
 Flow'd with the stream all down his cold white side  
 The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and soil'd,  
 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets  
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,  
 By romping children, whom their nurses call  
 From the hot fields at noon his head droop'd low,  
 His limbs grew slack, motionless, white, he lay—  
 White, with eyes clos'd, only when heavy gasps,  
 Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame, 850  
 Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,  
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face  
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs  
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,  
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
 And youth and bloom, and this delightful world

So on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead  
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son  
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd 860  
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,  
Lie prone enormous, down the mountain side—  
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son

And night came down o'er the solemn waste,  
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
And darken'd all, and a cold fog, with night,  
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose  
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires  
Began to twinkle through the fog for now 870  
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal  
The Persians took it on the open sands  
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge  
And Rustum and his son were left alone

But the majestic river floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,  
Under the solitary moon he flow'd  
Right for the polar star, past Ogunje, 880  
Bumming, and bright, and large then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents, that for many a league  
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted lushy isles—  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pameie,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer —till at last  
The long'd for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright 890  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new bath'd stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aial Sea

## NOTES

THE Episode of *Sohrab and Rustum* is taken from the *Shāhnāma*, the Persian national epic composed by the poet Firdawsī about the end of the tenth century. The early legends of Persia are full of the exploits of Rustum. Again and again he drove back the enemies of his country, and all the stories which have gathered round his name bear witness to the perpetual strife between Irān and Turan, Persia and Tartary, Aryan and Mongol.

On one of his many expeditions Rustum came to Semenjān, and there married the daughter of the king, who was feudatory to Afrasiab the Tartar king and the great enemy of Persia. After Rustum's departure, a son was born, who was called Sohrab. His mother, afraid of losing her son, sent word to Rustum that the child was a girl, and the secret of his parentage was not revealed to the boy till he was grown up. Then Sohrab desired to seek his father, and, with the aid of his grandfather, made preparations to lead a mighty host against Persia. Afrasiab decided to help him, in the expectation that both Rustum and Sohrab would be killed in the war, and that Persia would then be at his mercy. Sohrab accordingly marched against Persia with a great army, in the hope that Rustum would be sent against him and that he would thus have an opportunity of making himself known to his father. The poem opens with the Persian and Tartar armies confronting each other on the banks of the Oxus.

2 *Oxus*. The Oxus rises in the Pamir (or Pamere) plateau, the 'roof of the world', and flows into the Sea of Aral. It is a broad, rapid river, and was of great commercial importance in antiquity, as it formed a means of communication between western Asia and India. It was also important historically as forming the boundary line between the great Asiatic monarchies and the nomadic tribes. There are still traces of an old channel running from the south-west of the Sea of Aral to the Caspian, and it is probable that the Oxus used to flow into the Caspian.

11 *Peran-Wisa*. The first noble of Turan, who saved the life of Kai Khosroo, as an infant, and caused him to be brought up as a shepherd.

38 *Afrasiab*, King of Tartary, who invaded Persia three times he was finally defeated by Rustum, and slain by Kai Khosroo.



42 *Adar-bayan*, the most northerly province of Persia

82 *Seistan*, a province of Persia bordering on Afghanistan

*Zal* the son of *Sahm* He had light hair, which was considered unlucky in Persia, and he was therefore exposed as an infant, on the Elburz mountains, and was cared for by a griffin When he had grown up to manhood, he was found by his father *Sahm*, who had been warned in a dream that his son was still alive Later he became governor of *Seistan*, and lived to a great age

101 *Kara-Kul* in *Bokhara*

112 *long-necked cranes* 'The cranes migrate in vast flocks, which fly during the day a great height in the air in a V- or W-shaped formation Under the orders of an experienced leader, each bird keeps his place in the ranks' (*Lydekker*) Cf *Iliad* ii 459-63 'And as the many tribes of feathered birds, wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans, on the Asian mead by *Kaystrios*' stream, fly hither and thither joying in their plumage, and with loud cries settle ever onwards, and the mead resounds, even so poured forth the many tribes of warriors from ships and huts into the *Skamandrian* plain'

113 *Casbin*, a city and district to the south of the Elburz chain These mountains lie to the south of the Caspian, and must be distinguished from Mount Elburz, the highest peak in the Caucasus

119 *Bokhara* and *Khiva*, provinces of Turkestan *Sohrab*'s army was made up of recruits from the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, many of which are here mentioned

128 *Ferghana*, a province of Turkestan to the north of the *Tian-shan* Mountains, in which the *Jaxartes* rises

131 *Kypchak*, in *Khiva*

132 *unkempered*, uncombed A *S cemban*, to comb

138 *Khorassan*, a province in the north east of Persia

160 *Cabool*, the chief city of Afghanistan

161 *Indian Caucasus*, the Hindu Koosh mountains

162 *sky-neighbouring* Compare Shakespeare's 'heaven-kissing hill' (*Hamlet* iii iv 60)

164 Migratory birds sometimes miss their course, driven out of it perhaps by storms, and come against high mountains. Not being able to raise themselves to great altitudes, and not having the instinct to turn back, they die of cold or hunger. A high pass in the chain of Mont Blanc is called the Col des Hirondelles, because the first party to reach it found a number of swallows dead on the snow near the top.

178 *aloof he sits* Cf. Iliad i. 488-92 'But he sat by his swift-faring ships, still with, even the heaven-spung son of Peleus, Achilles fleet of foot, he betook him neither to the assembly that is the hero's glory, neither to war, but consumed his heart in tarrying in his place, and yearned for the war-cry and for battle.'

223 *Kar Khosroo* is the first genuinely historical Persian figure. He was known to the Greeks as Cyrus the Elder, and many legends are told of his birth and parentage. He conquered Croesus King of Lydia, captured Babylon when Belshazzar was slain, and was killed in a great battle with the Turanians.

268 *a plume of horse hair* Cf. Iliad iii. 334-8 for the description of the armour of Paris. 'And over his shoulders cast he his silver-studded sword of bronze, and then a shield great and sturdy. And on his mighty head he set a wrought helmet of horse-hair crest, whereover the plume nodded terribly, and he took him a strong spear fitted to his grasp.'

276 *dight*=adorned. As a past participle, it is short for *dighted*, from the obsolete verb *dight*, to arrange, prepare, A.S. *dihtan*, to get in order, arrange (Skeat).

286 *sandy Bahrein*. The Bahrein islands are one of the chief centres of the pearl fishery, and consist of one island considerably larger than the Isle of Wight, a small island, on which is a town, and some rocks. Since 1867 they have been under the protection of Great Britain.

288 *tale*, number. Cf. the 'tale of bricks', Exod. v. 8 and Milton's *L'Allegro*, 67, 'Every shepherd tells his tale.'

293 *swathe* or *swath*. A row of mown grass, hence a track through a field. Apparently from a Teutonic verb, meaning to slice, which appears in the Norse word *svada*, having that meaning.

388 seqq The fight between Sohrab and Rustum is full of reminiscences of the sixteenth book of the Iliad, where the fight between Patroklos and Saipedon is described at length

412 *Hyphasis or Hydaspes*, the modern Sutlej and Jhelum, tributaries of the Indus in the Punjab The Hyphasis marked the limit of Alexander the Great's advance into India Both these rivers rise in the Himalayas The Sutlej rises on the north side very near the source of the Indus, and has cut its way through the chain

452 *autumn Star* Sirius, the largest star in the constellation of the Dog, rose in Homer's time in July, and was therefore connected with the parching heat of summer hence the 'Dog Days' The epithet 'baleful' is the stock classical epithet for Sirius, and it is also the brightest star in the heavens Matthew Arnold probably had this in his mind, though it is difficult to call Sirius an *Autumn Star* Horace mentions both Arcturus (*Carm* III i 27), and the constellation Scorpio (*Carm* II xvii 17), in connexion with autumn weather unfavourable to human life

481 seqq *for a cloud grew suddenly in Heaven* Cf Iliad xvii 365-75 'Thus strove they, as it had been fire, nor would'st thou have thought there was still sun or moon, for over all the battle where the chiefs stood around the slain son of Menoitios they were shrouded in darkness, while the other Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans fought at ease in the clear air, and piercing sunlight was spread over them, and on all the earth and hills there was no cloud seen, and they ceased fighting now and again, avoiding each other's dolorous darts and standing far apart'

501 *Ruksh uttered a dreadful cry* Cf Iliad xvii 426-8 'But the horses of Aiakides that were apart from the battle were weeping, since first they were aware that their charioteer was fallen in the dust beneath the hand of man-slaying Hector'

679 *griffin* = a fabulous creature with wings For a further description see *Alice in Wonderland*

751 The *Helmund* rises in the Kohi-Baba hills, flows through Afghanistan and Seistan, and disappears into a lake

763 *Moonghab, Tyend, Kohik, northern Su*, rivers of Turkestan

861 *Jemshad in Persepolis* Jemshid was a mythical Persian king. Persepolis was one of the capital cities of Persia, and was probably founded by Cyrus the Elder or his son Cambyzes. Alexander the Great is said to have set fire to it with his own hand in B.C. 331. The great ruins known as the 'Throne of Jemshid' contain huge pillars, some of which are still standing.

878 *Chorasman waste* The Chorasmians were a people who inhabited the banks and islands of the lower course of the Oxus.

875-92 Note the beauty of the closing passage. The calm and permanence of Nature are contrasted with the tragic stress and transitoriness of human life. The *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* break off abruptly, but the Greek tragedians never ended on a climax. Modern taste is all the other way, for instance, *Hamlet* on the stage is generally curtailed, and the play ends with the death of the hero.

## II BALDER DEAD

### I SENDING

So on the floor lay Balder dead, and round  
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,  
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown  
At Balder, whom no weapon pierc'd or clove.  
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough  
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave  
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm  
And all the Gods and all the Heroes came  
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor 10  
Weeping and wailing, and Valhalla rang  
Up to its golden roofs with sobs and cries  
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,  
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls the wine  
And now would night have fall'n, and found them yet  
Wailing, but otherwise was Odin's will  
And thus the Father of the Ages spake —

'Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail'  
Not to lament in was Valhalla made  
If any here might weep for Balder's death, 20  
I most might weep, his father, such a son  
I lose to-day, so bright, so lov'd a God  
But he has met that doom, which long ago  
The Nornies, when his mother bore him, spun,

And fate set seal, that so his end must be  
 Balder has met his death, and ye survive  
 Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail?  
 For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,  
 All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,  
 And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all, 30  
 But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,  
 With women's tears and weak complaining cries—  
 Why should we meet another's portion so?  
 Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,  
 With cold, dry eyes, and hearts compos'd and stern  
 To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven  
 By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,  
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 Be strictly call'd for, in the appointed day  
 Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns, 40  
 Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,  
 And on the deck build high a funeral pile,  
 And on the top lay Balder's corpse and put  
 Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea  
 To burn, for that is what the dead desire'

So having spoke, the king of Gods arose,  
 And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode,  
 And from the hall of Heaven he rode away  
 To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,  
 The mount, from whence his eye surveys the world  
 And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs 51  
 To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men  
 And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze  
 Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow,  
 And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,  
 Fair men who live in holes under the ground,  
 Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,  
 Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods,  
 For well he knew the Gods would heed his woid,  
 And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre 60

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back  
From around Balder, all the Heroes went,  
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor  
And on their golden chans they sate again,  
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven,  
And before each the cooks who serv'd them plac'd  
New messes of the boar Sæmner's flesh,  
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead  
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes,  
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank, 70  
While twilight fell, and sacred night came on

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods  
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,  
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd  
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall,  
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God  
Down to the margin of the roaring sea  
He came, and sadly went along the sand,  
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs  
Where in and out the screaming seafowl fly, 80  
Until he came to where a gully breaks  
Through the cliff wall, and a fresh stream runs down  
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea  
There in the glen Fensalei stands, the house  
Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods,  
And shows its lighted windows to the main  
There he went up, and pass'd the open doors,  
And in the hall he found those women old,  
The prophetesses, who by rite eterne  
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire 90  
Both night and day, and by the inner wall  
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,  
With folded hands, revolving things to come  
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said —  
'Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me'  
For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,

Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven,  
 And, after that, of ignorant witless mind  
 Thou bailest me, and unforeseeing soul,  
 That I alone must take the branch from Lok, 100  
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 And cast it at the dear-lov'd Balder's breast  
 At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—  
 'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm  
 Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly,  
 For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven?  
 Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back?  
 Or—for thou know'st the fates, and things allow'd—  
 Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,  
 And make exchange, and give my life for his?' 110

He spoke the mother of the Gods replied —  
 'Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,  
 Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these?  
 That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,  
 Should change his lot, and fill another's life,  
 And Hela yield to this, and let him go!  
 On Balder Death hath laid her hand not thee,  
 Nor doth she count this life a price for that  
 For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,  
 Would freely die to purchase Balder back, 120  
 And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm  
 For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven  
 Which Gods and Heroes lead, in feast and fray,  
 Waiting the darkness of the final times,  
 That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake,  
 Balder their joy, so bright, so lov'd a God  
 But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way  
 Yet in my secret mind one way I know,  
 Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail,  
 But much must still be tried, which shall but fail'

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said — 131  
 'What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st?'



Is it a matter which a God might try?’

And straight the mother of the Gods replied —  
 ‘There is a road which leads to Hela’s realm,  
 Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven  
 Who goes that way must take no other horse  
 To ride, but Sleipner, Odin’s horse, alone  
 Nor must he choose that common path of Gods  
 Which every day they come and go in Heaven, 140  
 O’er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall’s watch,  
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth and men,  
 But he must tread a dark untravell’d road  
 Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride  
 Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
 Through valleys deep engulf’d, with daring streams  
 And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge  
 Which spans with golden arches Giall’s stream,  
 Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel keeps,  
 Who tells the passing troops of dead their way 150  
 To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela’s realm  
 And she will bid him northward steer his course  
 Then he will journey through no lighted land,  
 Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set,  
 But he must ever watch the northern Bear,  
 Who from her frozen height with jealous eye  
 Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,  
 And is alone not dipt in Ocean’s stream  
 And straight he will come down to Ocean’s strand—  
 Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world, 160  
 And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell  
 But he will reach its unknown northern shore,  
 Far, far beyond the outmost giant’s home,  
 At the chink’d fields of ice, the waste of snow  
 And he will fare across the dismal ice  
 Northward, until he meets a stretching wall  
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate  
 But then he must dismount, and on the ice

Tighten the girths of Sleipnei, Odin's horse,  
 And make him leap the grate, and come within 170  
 And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm  
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,  
 And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell  
 And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,  
 And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne  
 Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts  
 Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around,  
 But he must straight accost their solemn queen,  
 And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,  
 Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven 180  
 For Balder, whom she holds by right below,  
 If haply he may melt her heart with words,  
 And make her yield, and give him Balder back '

She spoke, but Hoder answer'd her and said —  
 'Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st,  
 No journey for a sightless God to go '

And straight the mother of the Gods replied —  
 'Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son  
 But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st  
 To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way, 190  
 Shall go, and I will be his guide unseen '

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil  
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands  
 But at the central hearth those women old,  
 Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil,  
 Began again to heap the sacred fire  
 And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,  
 Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea,  
 And came again down to the roaring waves,  
 And back along the beach to Asgard went, 200  
 Pondering on that which Frea said should be

But night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets.  
 Then from their loathed feast the Gods arose,  
 And lighted torches, and took up the corpse

Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,  
 And laid it on a bier, and bare him home  
 Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,  
 Bieldablik, on whose columns Balder giav'd  
 The enchantments that recall the dead to life  
 For wise he was, and many curious aits,                   210  
 Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew,  
 Unhappy but that ait he did not know,  
 To keep his own life safe, and see the sun —  
 There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,  
 And each bespake him as he laid him down —

‘Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne  
 Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,  
 So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods’

They spake, and each went home to his own house  
 But there was one, the first of all the Gods                   220  
 For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven,  
 Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,  
 Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,  
 Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,  
 Against the harbour, by the city wall  
 Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up  
 From the sea cityward, and knew his step,  
 Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,  
 For it grew dark, but Hoder touch'd his arm  
 And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers                   230  
 Brushes across a tired traveller's face  
 Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,  
 On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,  
 And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by—  
 So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said —

‘Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn  
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back,  
 And they shall be thy guides, who have the power’

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd  
 And Hermod gazed into the night, and said —                   240

‘Who is it utters through the dark his hest  
 So quickly, and will wait for no reply?  
 The voice was like the unhappy Hoder’s voice  
 Howbeit I will see, and do his hest,  
 For there rang note divine in that command’

So speaking, the fleet-footed Heimdall came  
 Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house,  
 And all the Gods lay down in their own homes  
 And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,  
 Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods, 250  
 And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt  
 His sword upright, and fell on it, and died

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,  
 The throne, from which his eye surveys the world,  
 And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode  
 To Asgard And the stars came out in heaven,  
 High over Asgard, to light home the King  
 But fiercely Odin gallop’d, mov’d in heart,  
 And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came  
 And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang 260  
 Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,  
 And the Gods trembled on their golden beds  
 Hearing the wrathful Father coming home—  
 For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came  
 And to Valhalla’s gate he rode, and left  
 Sleipner, and Sleipner went to his own stall,  
 And in Valhalla Odin laid him down

But in Bredablik Nanna, Balder’s wife,  
 Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,  
 And stood by Balder lying on his bier 270  
 And at his head and feet she station’d Scalds  
 Who in their lives were famous for their song,  
 These o’er the corpse inton’d a plaintive strain,  
 A dirge, and Nanna and her train replied  
 And far into the night they wail’d their dirge  
 But when their souls were satisfied with wail,

They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went  
Into an upper chamber, and lay down,  
And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on dawn,  
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low,   281  
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,  
In garb, in form, in feature as he was,  
Alive, and still the rays were round his head  
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven, he stood  
Over against the curtain of the bed,  
And gaz'd on Nanna as she slept, and spake —

'Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe  
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,  
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek, but thou,   290  
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep  
Sleep on I watch thee, and am here to aid  
Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul,  
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead  
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare  
To gather wood, and build a funeral pile  
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,  
That sad, sole honour of the dead, and thee  
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,  
With me, for thus ordains the common rite   300  
But it shall not be so but mild, but swift,  
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,  
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,  
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee  
And well I know that by no stroke of death,  
Tardy or swift, wouldst thou be loath to die,  
So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,  
Whom thou so well hast lov'd, but I can smoothe  
Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail  
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward   310  
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven  
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desir'd

But right bair this, not only thy desire  
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead  
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm,  
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,  
Whom Hela with austere control presides,  
For of the race of Gods is no one there,  
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen,  
And all the nobler souls of mortal men 320  
On battle-field have met their death, and now  
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall,  
Only the inglorious sort are there below,  
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there--  
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay  
But even there, O Nanna, we might find  
Some solace in each other's look and speech,  
Wandering together through that gloomy world,  
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,  
While we yet lived, among the other Gods' 330

He spake, and straight his lineaments began  
To fade, and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out  
Her arms towards him with a cry, but he  
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd  
And as the woodman sees a little smoke  
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear--  
So Balder faded in the night away  
And Nanna on her bed sunk back, but then  
Frea, the mother of the Gods, with stroke  
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul, 340  
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below,  
And instantly the sacred moor appear'd

## II

## JOURNEY TO THE DEAD

FORTH from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,  
 Day drove his couser with the shining mane,  
 And in Valhalla, from his gable perch,  
 The golden-crested cock began to crow  
 Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night  
 With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,  
 Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven,  
 But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note, 350  
 To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks  
 And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke  
 And from their beds the Heroes rose, and down'd  
 Their arms, and led their horses from the stall  
 And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court  
 Were rang'd, and then the daily fray began  
 And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn  
 'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood,  
 But all at night return to Odin's hall  
 Woundless and fiesh, such lot is theirs in Heaven  
 And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth 361  
 Toward earth and fights of men, and at their side  
 Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode,  
 And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came,  
 There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,  
 Then horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,  
 And pick the bravest warriors out for death.  
 Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven,  
 To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall 370  
 But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,  
 Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought,  
 To feast their eyes with looking on the fray,

Not did they to their judgement-place repair  
 By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,  
 Where they hold council, and give laws for men  
 But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,  
 To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold,  
 Where are in circle rang'd twelve golden chairs,  
 And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne 380  
 There all the Gods in silence sate them down,  
 And thus the Father of the ages spake —

'Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,  
 With all, which it beseems the dead to have,  
 And make a funeral pile on Balder's ship,  
 On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.  
 But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down  
 To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back'

So said he, and the Gods arose, and took  
 Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor, 390  
 Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know  
 Forth wended they, and drave their steeds before  
 And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fair'd  
 To the dark forests, in the early dawn,  
 And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd  
 And from the glens all day an echo came  
 Of crashing falls, for with his hammer Thor  
 Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines, 398  
 And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods  
 Made fast the woven ropes, and hal'd them down,  
 And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the swaid,  
 And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,  
 And drave them homeward, and the snorting steeds  
 Went straining through the crackling brushwood down  
 And by the darkling forest paths the Gods  
 Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs  
 And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd  
 Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,  
 And loos'd them of their loads on the seashore, 409



And rang'd the wood in stacks by Balder's ship,  
 And every God went home to his own house

But when the Gods were to the foiest gone,  
 Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth  
 And saddled him, before that, Sleipner brook'd  
 No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,  
 On his broad back no lesser rider bore,  
 Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,  
 Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,  
 Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear  
 But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fair'd 420

In silence up the dark untravell'd road  
 Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went  
 All day, and daylight wan'd, and night came on  
 And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,  
 Nine days, nine nights, towards the northern ice  
 Through valleys deep-engulf'd, by roaring streams  
 And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge  
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
 And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,  
 In the strait passage, at the farther end 430

Where the road issues between walling rocks  
 Scant space that warder left for passers by,  
 But as when cowheids in October drive  
 Then kne across a snowy mountain pass  
 To winter pasture on the southern side,  
 And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way,  
 Wedg'd in the snow, then painfully the hinds  
 With goad and shouting urge then cattle past,  
 Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow  
 To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—  
 So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way, 441  
 And question'd Hermod as he came, and said —

'Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse  
 Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream  
 Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race and home

But yesternorn, five troops of dead pass'd by,  
 Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,  
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone  
 And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,  
 Like men who live and draw the vital air,                   450  
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceas'd.  
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here'

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her —  
 'O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son  
 Of Odin, and my high-roof'd house is built  
 Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods,  
 And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride  
 And I come, sent this road on Balder's track,  
 Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no?'

He spake, the warder of the bridge replied —                   460  
 'O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods  
 On of the horses of the Gods resound  
 Upon my bridge, and, when they cross, I know  
 Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road  
 Below there, to the north, toward Hela's realm  
 From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,  
 Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air  
 By the dim vapour-blotted light of stairs,  
 Which hangs over the ice where lies the road  
 For in that ice are lost those northern streams,                   470  
 Freezing and ridding in their onward flow,  
 Which from the fountain of Vergelmei run,  
 The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne  
 There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,  
 Hela's pale swarms, and there was Balder bound  
 Ride on, pass free but he by this is there'

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room  
 And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by  
 Across the bridge; then she took post again  
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below,                   480  
 And over a darksome tract, which knows no sun

But by the blotted light of stars, he fair'd  
 And he came down to Ocean's northern strand  
 At the dear ice, beyond the giants' home  
 Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice  
 Still north, until he met a stretching wall  
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate  
 Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,  
 On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
 And made him leap the grate, and came within 490  
 And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,  
 The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the dead,  
 And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell  
 For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,  
 Outmost, the others near the centre run—  
 The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain,  
 These flow by Hela's throne, and near them spring  
 And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes  
 And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds  
 Of some clear river, issuing from a lake, 500  
 On autumn days, before they cross the sea;  
 And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs  
 Swinging, and others skim the river streams,  
 And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—  
 So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts  
 Women, and infants, and young men who died  
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields,  
 And old men, known to glory, but their stain  
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,  
 Not wounds, yet, dying, they their armour wore,  
 And now have chief regard in Hela's realm 511  
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,  
 Greeted of none, disfeatur'd and forlorn—  
 Cowards, who were in sloughs inter'd alive,  
 And round them still the wattled huddles hung,  
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them deep,  
 To hide their shameful memory from men,

But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne  
 Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,  
 And Hela sat thereon, with countenance stein, 520  
 And thus bespake him first the solemn queen —

‘Unhappy, how hast thou endur'd to leave  
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land  
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades?  
 How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,  
 Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore?  
 Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall?’

She spake but down off Slepner Hermod sprang,  
 And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees,  
 And spake, and mild entreated her, and said — 530

‘O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare  
 Then errands to each other, or the ways  
 They go? the errand and the way is known  
 Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in Heaven  
 For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below.  
 Restore him, for what part fulfils he here?  
 Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,  
 And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?  
 Not for such end, O queen, thou hold'st thy realm  
 For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods 540  
 And Heroes, where they live in light and joy  
 Thither restore him, for his place is there’

He spoke, and grave replied the solemn queen —  
 ‘Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven’  
 A strange, unlikely errand, sure, is thine  
 Do the Gods send to me to make them blest?  
 Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtain'd  
 Three mighty children to my father Lok  
 Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—  
 Fenris the wolf, the serpent huge, and me 550  
 Of these the serpent in the sea ye cast,  
 Who since in you despite hath wax'd amain,  
 And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world,

Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,  
 And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule,  
 While on his island in the lake afar,  
 Made fast to the bor'd crag, by wile not strength  
 Subdu'd, with limber chains lives Fenris bound  
 Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,  
 Your mate, though loath'd, and feasts in Odin's hall,  
 But him too foes await, and netted snares, 561  
 And in a cave a bed of needle rocks,  
 And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall  
 Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,  
 And with himself set us his offspring free,  
 When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne  
 Till then in peril or in pain we live,  
 Wrought by the Gods and ask the Gods our aid?  
 Howbeit, we abide our day, till then,  
 We do not, as some feebler haters do, 570  
 Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,  
 Helpless to better us, or ruin them  
 Come then, if Balder was so dear beloved,  
 And this is true, and such a loss is Heavens—  
 Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restor'd  
 Show me through all the world the signs of grief  
 Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops  
 Let all that lives and moves upon the earth  
 Weep him, and all that is without life weep,  
 Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him, plants and stones  
 So shall I know the lost was dear indeed, 581  
 And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven'  
 She spake, and Heimod answer'd her, and said —  
 'Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be  
 But come, declare me this, and truly tell  
 May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail?  
 Or is it here withheld to greet the dead?'  
 He spake, and straightway Hela answer'd him.—  
 'Heimod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold

Converse, his speech remains, though he be dead' 590

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake —  
 'Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail!  
 Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,  
 The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven,  
 Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd  
 For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,  
 Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell,  
 Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm  
 And sure of all the happiest far art thou  
 Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven,  
 Alive, thou wert of Gods the most lov'd, 601  
 And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,  
 Here, and hast honour among all the dead'

He spake, and Balder utter'd him reply,  
 But feebly, as a voice far off, he said —  
 'Hermod the numble, gild me not my death.  
 Better to live a slave, a captur'd man,  
 Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,  
 Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead  
 And now I count not of these terms as safe 610  
 To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,  
 Though I be lov'd, and many mourn my death,  
 For double-minded ever was the seed  
 Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give  
 Howbeit, report thy message, and therewith,  
 To Odin, to my father, take this ring,  
 Memorial of me, whether sav'd or no  
 And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen  
 Me sitting here below by Hela's side,  
 Crown'd, having honour among all the dead' 620

He spake, and rais'd his hand, and gave the ring  
 And with inscrutable regard the queen  
 Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb  
 But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more  
 Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen,

Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride  
 Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven  
 And to the wall he came, and found the grate  
 Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice,  
 And o'er the ice he far'd to Ocean's strand, 630  
 And up from thence, a wet and misty road,  
 To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream  
 Worse was that way to go than to return,  
 For him for others all return is barr'd  
 Nine days he took to go, two to return,  
 And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven  
 And as a traveller in the early dawn  
 To the steep edge of some great valley comes,  
 Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,  
 Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale, 640  
 But o'er them, on the farther slope, descies  
 Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun—  
 So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven  
 And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air  
 Of Heaven, and mightily, as wing'd, he flew  
 And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise,  
 And he drew near, and heard no living voice  
 In Asgard, and the golden halls were dumb  
 Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods,  
 And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd  
 Under the gate-house to the sands, and found 651  
 The Gods on the seashore by Balder's ship

## III

## FUNERAL

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,  
 Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne,  
 And Hermod came down towards them from the gate  
 And Lok, the father of the serpent, first

Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake —

‘See, here is Hermod, who comes single back  
From Hell and shall I tell thee how he seems?  
Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog, 660  
Some morn, at market, in a crowded town—  
Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,  
And follows this man after that, for hours,  
And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls  
Before a stranger’s threshold, not his home,  
With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue  
Hangs quivering out between his dust-smeared jaws,  
And piteously he eyes the passers by,  
But home his master comes to his own farm,  
Far in the country, wondering where he is— 670  
So Hermod comes to day unfollow’d home’

And straight his neighbour, mov’d with wrath,  
replied —

‘Deceiver, fair in form, but false in heart!  
Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—  
Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe!  
Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,  
And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords,  
And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim!  
If clear from plotting Balder’s death, to swim,  
But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown, 680  
And perish, against fate, before thy day!’

So they two soft to one another spake  
But Odin look’d toward the land, and saw  
His messenger, and he stood forth, and cried  
And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,  
And in his father’s hand put Sleipner’s rein,  
And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said —

‘Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven!  
Lo, home, having perform’d your will, I come.  
Into the joyless kingdom have I been, 690  
Below, and look’d upon the shadowy tribes



Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn queen,  
 And to your prayer she sends you this reply  
*Show her through all the world the signs of grief*  
*Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops*  
*Let Gods, men, brutes, beweepe him, plants and stones*  
*So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,*  
*And bend her heart, and give you Balder back '*

He spoke, and all the Gods to Odin look'd,  
 And straight the Father of the ages said — 700

'Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day  
 But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds  
 And in procession all come near, and weep  
 Balder, for that is what the dead desire  
 When ye enough have wept, then build a pile  
 Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire  
 Out of our sight, that we may turn from grief,  
 And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven '

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd, and Odin donn'd  
 His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold, 710  
 And led the way on Sleipner, and the rest  
 Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king  
 And thence in arms around the dead they rode,  
 Weeping, the sands were wetted, and their arms,  
 With their thick-falling tears so good a friend  
 They mourn'd that day, so bright, so lov'd a God  
 And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands  
 On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail —

'Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son!  
 In that great day, the twilight of the Gods, 720  
 When Muspel's children shall beleague Heaven,  
 Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm '

Thou camest near the next, O warrior Thor!  
 Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,  
 Swaying the long-hand'd goats with silver'd rein,  
 And over Balder's corpse these words didst say  
 'Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,

And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,  
 Now, and I know not how they prize thee there,  
 But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd  
 For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife 731  
 Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,  
 As among those whose joy and work is war,  
 And daily strifes arise, and angry words  
 But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,  
 Heard no one ever an injurious word  
 To God or Hero, but thou kepest back  
 The others, labouring to compose their brawls.  
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind'  
 For we lose him, who smooth'd all strife in Heaven.'

He spake and all the Gods assenting wail'd, 741  
 And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears,  
 The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all  
 Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife  
 Her long ago the wandering Oder took  
 To mate, but left her to roam distant lands,  
 Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold  
 Names hath she many, Vanadis on earth  
 They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven,  
 She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake 750  
 'Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road  
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way  
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,  
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found  
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wert  
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,  
 And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word  
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,  
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart  
 First drove him from me into distant lands 760  
 Since then I vainly seek him through the world,  
 And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,  
 But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain

Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,  
 To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say  
*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears!*  
*One day the wandering Oder will return,*  
*Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search*  
*On some great road, or resting in an inn*  
*Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree* 770  
 So Balder said,—but Oder, well I know,  
 My truant Ode! I shall see no more  
 To the world's end, and Balder now is gone,  
 And I am left uncomfited in Heaven'

She spake, and all the Goddesses bewail'd  
 Last, from among the Heroes one came near,  
 No God, but of the hero-troop the chief—  
 Regnei, who swept the northern sea with fleets,  
 And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,  
 Living, but Ella captiv'd him and slew,— 780  
 A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,  
 Now time obscures it and men's later deeds  
 He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said —  
 'Baldei, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven  
 Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,  
 Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.  
 And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,  
 After the feast is done, in Odin's hall,  
 But they harp ever on one string, and wake  
 Remembrance in our soul of wars alone, 790  
 Such as on earth we valiantly have wag'd,  
 And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death  
 But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike  
 Another note, and, like a bird in spring,  
 The voice of joyance minded us, and youth,  
 And wife, and children, and our ancient home  
 Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more  
 My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,  
 Nor Ella's victory on the English coast,

But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle, 800  
 And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend  
 Her flock along the white Norwegian beach  
 Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy  
 Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead '

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd  
 But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,  
 And soon had all that day been spent in wail,  
 But then the Father of the ages said —

'Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail  
 Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship, 810  
 Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre '

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought  
 The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,  
 Full the deck's breadth, and lofty, then the corpse  
 Of Balder on the highest top they laid,  
 With Nanna on his right, and on his left  
 Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew  
 And they set jals of wine and oil to lean  
 Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,  
 Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine, 820  
 And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,  
 And slew the dogs who at his table fed.  
 And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he lov'd,  
 And placed them on the pyre, and Odin thiev  
 A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring  
 They fixt the mast, and hoisted up the sails,  
 Then they put fire to the wood, and Thor  
 Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern  
 To push the ship through the thick sand sparks flew  
 From the deep trench she plough'd—so strong a God  
 Furrow'd it—and the water gurgled in 881  
 And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd  
 But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,  
 And came down moaning to the sea, first squalls  
 Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd

The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire  
 And wreath'd in smoke the ship stood out to sea  
 Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,  
 And the pile crackled, and between the logs  
 Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt  
 Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd 841  
 The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,  
 And ate the shrivelling sails, but still the ship  
 Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire  
 And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gaz'd  
 And while they az'd, the sun went lurid down  
 Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on  
 Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm,  
 But through the dark they watch'd the burning ship  
 Still carried o'er the distant waters on, 850  
 Farther and farther, like an eye of fire  
 And as in the dark night a travelling man  
 Who bivouacs in a forest 'mid the hills,  
 Sees suddenly a spire of flame shoot up  
 Out of the black waste forest, far below,  
 Which wood cutters have lighted near their lodge  
 Against the wolves, and all night long it flares —  
 So flar'd, in the far darkness, Balder's pyre  
 But fainter, as the stars rose high, it burn'd,  
 The bodies were consum'd, ash chok'd the pile 860  
 And as, in a decaying winter-fire,  
 A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—  
 So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,  
 Reddening the sea around, and all was dark  
 But the Gods went by starlight up the shore  
 To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall  
 At table, and the funeral-feast began  
 All night they ate the boar Sæmner's flesh,  
 And from their horns, with silver unmm'd, drank mead,  
 Silent, and waited for the sacred morn 870  
 And morning over all the world was spread

Then from their loathed feast the Gods arose,  
 And took their horses, and set forth to ride  
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain,  
 Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode  
 And they found Mimir sitting by his fount  
 Of wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs,  
 And saw the Nornies watering the roots  
 Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-dew 880  
 There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones,  
 And thus the Father of the ages said —

‘Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Heimod brought  
 Accept them or reject them, both have grounds  
 Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,  
 To leave for ever Balder in the grave,  
 An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades  
 But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail?—  
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd,  
 For dear-beloved was Balder while he liv'd 890  
 In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge him tears?  
 But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,  
 These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud  
 Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way?—  
 Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?—  
 If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,  
 Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior Thor  
 Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,  
 All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,  
 Should make irruption into Hela's realm, 900  
 And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,  
 And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?’

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud  
 But Freia, mother of the Gods, arose,  
 Daughter and wife of Odin, thus she said —

‘Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this!  
 Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even thine

For of all powers the mightiest far art thou,  
 Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven,  
 Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld 910  
 One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast wold.  
 For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee  
 In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,  
 Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay  
 The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought forth,  
 Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of Bor,  
 And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void  
 But of his flesh and members thou didst build  
 The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven  
 And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns, 920  
 Thou sent'st and fetch'd'st fire, and madest lights,  
 Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,  
 Dividing clear the paths of night and day  
 And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort,  
 Then me thou mad'st, of us the Gods were born  
 Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars  
 Of wood, and fram'd'st men, who till the earth,  
 Or on the sea, the field of plates, sail  
 And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,  
 Save one, Bergelmir, he on shipboard fled 930  
 Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang,  
 But all that brood thou hast remov'd far off,  
 And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell  
 But Hela into Nifheim thou threw'st,  
 And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,  
 A queen, and empire over all the dead  
 That empire wilt thou now invade, light up  
 Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear?—  
 Try it, but I, for one, will not applaud  
 Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight 940  
 Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven,  
 For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,  
 Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung,

And all that is to come I know, but loek  
 In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd  
 Come then, since Hela holds by right her prey,  
 But offers terms for his release to Heaven,  
 Accept the chance,—thou canst no more obtain  
 Send through the world thy messengers, entreat  
 All living and unliving things to weep 950  
 For Balder, if thou haply thus mayst melt  
 Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven.'

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,  
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands  
 Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word,  
 Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods  
 'Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray  
 All living and unliving things to weep  
 Balder, if haply he may thus be won'

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took  
 Their horses, and rode forth through all the world 961  
 North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd the  
 world,

Entreating all things to weep Balder's death  
 And all that lived, and all without life, wept  
 And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
 At winter's end, before the spring begins,  
 And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—  
 After an hour a dripping sound is heard  
 In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow  
 Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes, 970  
 And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down,  
 And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots  
 Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,  
 And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—  
 So through the world was heard a dripping noise  
 Of all things weeping to bring Balder back,  
 And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear  
 But Heimod rode with Nioid, whom he took



To show him spits and beaches of the sea  
 Far off, where some unwain'd might fail to weep—  
 Nioid, the God of storms, whom fishes know, 981  
 Not born in Heaven, he was in Vanheim rear'd,  
 With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods,  
 He knows each frith, and every rocky creek  
 Flung with dark pines, and sands where seafowl  
 scream —

They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept  
 And they rode home together, through the wood  
 Of Janvid, which to east of Midgard lies  
 Bordering the giants, where the trees are none,  
 There in the wood before a cave they came, 990  
 Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,  
 Toothless and old, she gibes the passers by  
 Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape,  
 She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said.—  
 'Ye Gods, good luck, is it so dull in Heaven,  
 That ye come pleasuring to Thok's none wood?  
 Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites  
 Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow,  
 Whose manger is stuff'd full of good flesh hay,  
 Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head 1000  
 To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—  
 So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven'

She spake, but Heimod answer'd her and said —  
 'Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears  
 Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,  
 But will restore, if all things give him tears  
 Begrudge not thine ' to all was Balder dear'

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied —  
 'Is Balder dead?' and do ye come for tears?  
 Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre  
 Weep him all other things, if weep they will— 1011  
 I weep him not let Hela keep her prey!'  
 She spake, and to the cavern's depth she fled,

Mocking and Heimod knew their toil was vain  
 And as seafaring men, who long have wrought  
 In the great deep for gain, at last come home,  
 And towards evening see the headlands rise  
 Of their own country, and can clear descry  
 A fine of wither'd fuize which boys have lit  
 Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds 1020  
 Out of a till'd field inland,—then the wind  
 Catches them, and drives out again to sea,  
 And they go long days tossing up and down  
 Over the grey sea-ridges, and the glumpse  
 Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil—  
 So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Heimod spake —  
 'It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all  
 Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news,  
 I must again below, to Hela's realm ' 1030

He spoke, and Niord set forth back to Heaven  
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below,  
 The way he knew, and travers'd Giall's stream,  
 And down to Ocean grop'd, and cross'd the ice,  
 And came beneath the wall, and found the grate  
 Still lifted, well was his return foreknown  
 And once more Heimod saw around him spread  
 The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell  
 But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound  
 Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near, 1040  
 Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—  
 Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew  
 And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,  
 And call'd him by his name, and sternly said —

'Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes'  
 Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulf  
 Of the deep inner gloom, but flitest here,  
 In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,  
 Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne?

Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice, 1050  
 Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay'

He spoke, but Hoder answer'd him, and said --  
 'Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue  
 The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave?  
 For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,  
 Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,  
 Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven -  
 And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by?  
 No less than Balder have I lost the light  
 Of Heaven, and communion with my kin 1060

I too had once a wife, and once a child,  
 And substance, and a golden house in Heaven--  
 But all I left of my own act, and fled  
 Below, and dost thou hate me even here?  
 Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,  
 Though he has cause, have any cause, but he,  
 When that with downcast looks I hither came,  
 Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant voice  
 Welcome, he said, *if there be welcome here,*  
*Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me!* 1070

And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force  
 My hated converse on thee, came I up  
 From the deep gloom, where I will now return,  
 But earnestly I long'd to hover near,  
 Not too far off, when that thou camest by,  
 To feel the presence of a brother God  
 And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,  
 For the last time for here thou com'st no more'

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom  
 But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said --  
 'Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind 1081  
 Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind  
 Was Lok's, the unwitting hand alone was thine  
 But Gods are like the sons of men in this--  
 When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause,

Howbeit stay, and be appeas'd, and tell—  
 Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,  
 Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead?''

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake —  
 'His place of state remains by Hela's side, 1090  
 But empty, for his wife, for Nanna came  
 Lately below, and join'd him, and the pair  
 Frequent the still recesses of the realm  
 Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd  
 But they too, doubtless, will have breath'd the balm,  
 Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,  
 And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell'

He spake, and, as he ceas'd, a puff of wind  
 Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside  
 Round where they stood, and they beheld two forms 1100  
 Make towards them o'er the stretching cloudy plain  
 And Hermod straight perceiv'd them, who they were,  
 Balder and Nanna, and to Balder said —

'Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare  
 Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey  
 No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge  
 In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy  
 The love all bear toward thee, nor train up  
 Forset, thy son, to be belov'd like thee  
 Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age 1110  
 Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail!'

He spake and Balder answer'd him, and said —  
 'Hail and farewell' for here thou com'st no more  
 Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st  
 In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,  
 As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn,  
 For Nanna hath rejoind me, who, of old,  
 In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side,  
 And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd  
 My former life, and cheers me even here 1120  
 The iron frown of Hela is relax'd

When I draw nigh, and the wan tubes of dead  
 Trust me, and gladly bring for my award  
 Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates,  
 Shadows of hates, but they distress them still '

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply —  
 'Thou hast then all the solace death allows,  
 Esteem and function, and so far is well  
 Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,  
 Rusting for ever, and the years roll on, 1130  
 The generations pass, the ages grow,  
 And bring us nearer to the final day  
 When from the south shall march the fiery band  
 And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guide  
 And Fenris at his heel with broken chain,  
 While from the east the giant Rymer steers  
 His ship, and the great serpent makes to land,  
 And all are marshall'd in one flaming square  
 Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,  
 I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then ' 1140

He spake, but Balder answer'd him, and said —  
 'Mourn not for me' Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods,  
 Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,  
 Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day  
 The day will come, when Asgard's towers shall fall,  
 And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven,  
 But what were I, to save them in that hour?  
 If strength might save them, could not Odin save,  
 My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,  
 Vidar the silent, the impetuous Ty? 1150  
 I, what were I, when these can nought avail?  
 Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,  
 And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven  
 The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm,  
 And his black brother-bird from hence reply,  
 And buckles clash, and spears begin to pour—  
 Longing will stir within my breast, though vain

But not to me so grievous, as, I know,  
 To other Gods it were, is my enforced  
 Absence from fields where I could nothing aid, 1160  
 For I am long since weary of your storm  
 Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life  
 Something too much of war and broils, which make  
 Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood  
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail,  
 Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm  
 Inactive, therefore, let me lie, in gloom,  
 Unarm'd, inglorious, I attend the course  
 Of ages, and my late return to light,  
 In times less alien to a spirit mild, 1170  
 In new-recover'd seats, the happier day '

He spake, and the fleet Hermod thus replied —  
 'Brother, what seats are these, what happier day  
 Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone '

And the ray crowned Balder answer'd him —  
 'Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads  
 Another Heaven, the boundless no one yet  
 Hath reach'd it, there hereafter shall arise  
 The second Asgard, with another name  
 Thither, when o'er this present earth and Heavens  
 The tempest of the latter days hath swept, 1181  
 And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,  
 Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair,  
 Hoder and I shall join them from the grave  
 There re-assembling we shall see emerge  
 From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth  
 More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits  
 Self-springing, and a seed of man preserv'd,  
 Who then shall live in peace, as now in war  
 But we in Heaven shall find again with joy 1190  
 The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats  
 Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old  
 Re enter them with wonder, never fill

Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears  
 And we shall tread once more the well-known plain  
 Of Ida, and among the grass shall find  
 The golden dice with which we play'd of yore,  
 And that will bring to mind the former life  
 And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse  
 Of Odin, the delights of other days 1200  
 O Hermod, pray that thou mayst join us then !  
 Such for the future is my hope, meanwhile  
 I rest the thiall of Hela, and endure  
 Death, and the gloom which round me even now  
 Thickens, and to its inner gulf recalls  
 Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd  
 He spoke, and wav'd farewell, and gave his hand  
 To Nanna, and she gave their brother blind  
 Her hand, in turn, for guidance, and the three  
 Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon 1210  
 Faded from sight into the interior gloom  
 But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,  
 Mute, gazing after them in tears, and fain,  
 Fain had he follow'd then receding steps,  
 Though they to death were bound, and he to Heaven.  
 Then, but a power he could not break withheld  
 And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,  
 And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees  
 Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head  
 To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun,— 1220  
 He strains to join their flight, and from his shed  
 Follows them with a long complaining cry—  
 So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven

## NOTES

IN Norse mythology the three divisions of the Universe are Asgard, Midgard, and Utgard. Asgard, the abode of the gods (the Æsir) in the sky, is surrounded by a wall the work of a giant, and is united to Midgard by a wonderful bridge, Bifrost, over which the gods come and go. Here Heimdall, who can see a hundred leagues and hear the grass grow, keeps watch against the attacks of the giants, who are hostile to gods and men. Midgard, the world of men, supports the vault of the sky, and is surrounded by the ocean, in which is a huge serpent. In the far north-west is Utgard, the abode of the giants. The great ash-tree Yggdrasil stretches its branches over the world, and the Norns or Fates sit by the spring at its foot. Under its roots is Nifheim (= the fog world) traversed by rivers which the guilty must cross to reach the place of punishment. In Valhalla, the Hall of the Dead, Odin holds his Court, and feasts with those mortals who had died in battle. The warrior maidens the Valkyries are sent to the battlefield to choose heroes of royal blood, whom they conduct to Valhalla.

The chief god is Odin (*Woden*, Wednesday) the All-Father, the god of song and war. From Lidskialf his seat on high he sees all the doings of men. His wife Frigg is the chief of the Valkyries, and half of those who fall in battle belong to her. She has a dwelling in Fensalen in the depths of the earth.

Thor (hence Thursday) is the Protector of Earth—the friend of men. The crops are under his special protection, and he sends forth showers, thunder, and lightning. Strength is his characteristic, and he is the terror of the giants. He is generally represented with a short-handled hammer. The third great god was called Tyr or Tiw (Tuesday), the god of war. Around these gods are grouped inferior deities, sons of Odin, such as Vidar, Heimdall, Balder, Hodder, &c.

Lok or Loki, who is sometimes represented as a god, and sometimes as a giant, is the source of all trouble among gods and men. He is the father of Hela the goddess of the dead, and of Fenrisulfi, the wolf who is to overcome the gods in the



final battle. Fleeing from Thor he hid under a waterfall, was captured, and bound in Utgard, where he must remain till the destruction of the world. This destruction is Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods. Then Heimdall blows a blast with his horn, the world-tree groans, the serpent comes up out of the ocean, and spreads over the world. The bridge Bifrost is broken down, Lok leads the giants and the troops of Hela, the gods are defeated, and the earth sinks into the sea. When the waters and the fire have subsided, a new earth will appear, and a new race of men. The gods will assemble on the plains of Ida. Balder will come again with Hodur, and Vidar the son of Odin will establish a righteous sovereignty. It should be noted that the Scandinavian gods were not immortal; they perish when Ragnarok comes.

The story of *Balder Dead* is taken from the younger of Snorra-Edda—the Handbook of Poetics, composed by the Icelandic Snorri Sturluson, who died about 1241. Matthew Arnold quotes the following passage from the *Edda*, in the notes which he added to his poems —

‘Balder the Good having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Frigga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron, and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons, and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done, it became a favourite pastime of the Æsir, at their meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battleaxes, for, do what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honour shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Frigga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the Æsir were doing at their meetings. She replied that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him. “Aye,” said Frigga, “neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all of them.”

“What!” exclaimed the woman, “have all things sworn to spare Balder?”

“All things,” replied Frigga, “except one little shrub that

grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called Mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from "

'As soon as Loki heard this he went away and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. There he found Hödur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, "Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?"

"Because I am blind," answered Hödur, "and seen not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with."

"Come, then," said Loki, "do like the rest, and show honour to Balder, by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands."

'Hödur then took the mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless'—*Edda*

Professor Kauffmann, in his *Northern Mythology*, says that many of the incidents in this narrative are of Christian origin. 'For instance, the deliverance of Balder from hell is made to depend upon all creatures, living and dead, weeping for him. The sources of this feature of the story date from as late a period as the twelfth century, and are contained in a poem composed by Bjarn Kolbeinsson, who was consecrated Bishop of Orkney in 1188. The old pagan lay only tells how the mother wept for the death of her son.'

7 *Hödur*, the blind son of Odin

24 *The Nornes*, the three sisters who personify Fate. When a child is born they place its lot in its cradle.

28 This refers to the final battle and destruction of all things, even the gods.

47 *Sleipner*, i.e. the swift one, Odin's eight-footed horse.

53 *conjuring Lapps*. Magic was and is extensively practised among the Lapps.

124 *darkness of the final times*, i.e. Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

148 *Giall's stream*, the frontier river, across which is a golden bridge, guarded by a maiden.

155-8 The Great Bear never sets in northern latitudes. The Dog and the Hunter are the constellations Canis Major, which contains the great star Sirius, and Orion.

164 *chink'd*, creased

174-8 *the feeble shadowy tribes*      *solemn queen* Cf  
Odyssey, Book x 490-5 'But first must ye perform  
another journey, and reaching the dwelling of Hades and of  
dread Persephone, to seek to the spirit of Theban Tiresias,  
(see IV 34-47 and note), the blind soothsayer, whose wits  
abide steadfast To him Persephone hath given judgement,  
even in death, that he alone should have understanding but  
the other souls sweep shadow-like around' The 'solemn  
queen' suggests 'dread Persephone'

211 *runes*=the old characters used for incised inscrip-  
tions A S *rūn*=whisper or murmur, hence a mystery, and  
lastly an incised character, because writing was a secret  
known to few (Skeat)

271 *Scalds*=poets

298 Suttee was unknown to the Greeks, but was practised  
in India till it was put down by the English Government

302 *painless shall a stroke from Frea come* In Homer,  
women who die suddenly and without pain, are said to be  
slain by the gentle shafts of Artemis

320-5 Note the existence of the soul after death till  
Ragnarok, when Valhalla and Hela's realm are both  
destroyed

378 *Gladheim*=world of gladness

493-6 Cf *Paradise Lost*, Book II 577-86 —

Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate,  
Sad Acheron of sorrow black and deep,  
Cocytus, nam'd of lamentation loud  
Heard on the rueful stream, fierce Phlegethon  
Whose waves of torrent-fire inflame with rage,  
Far off from these a slow and silent stream,  
Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls  
Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks,  
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,  
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain

These were the rivers of the classical Hades Styx means  
hate, Acheron, pain or distress, Cocytus, the wailing, Phle-  
gethon, the burning, and Lethe, forgetfulness

513 *disfeatur'd*=whose features were marred beyond  
recognition

555 *nine unlighted realms* Of the nine circles of Dante's *Inferno*

558 *limber* = flexible

566 The sons of Muspel in the final struggle break down the bridge Bifrost

607 Cf *Odyssey*, xi 489-92 — 'Rather would I live on ground as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed'

718 *thus began the wail* Cf *Iliad* xxiv, where the women wail over the dead body of Hector

725 'Thor never rides, but drives in a car drawn by two he-goats'

742 *Freyja* = the goddess of love

748 *Vanadis*, i.e. one of the Vanir = the *Shining Ones*, a mighty race against whom the gods (the Æsir) first made war. Finally the Vanir were recognized by the Æsir as divine

778 *Regner*, or *Ragner* *Ladbiog*, a Danish hero who invaded Northumbria in the eighth century, and was cruelly put to death by the King *Ella*

800 *Thora*, the first wife of *Regner*

801 *Aslauga*, the daughter of a Norwegian kinglet. *Regner* wooed her, thinking she was a peasant girl, and afterwards married her

812-25 Cf *Iliad* xxiii, where the funeral of *Patrioklos* is described. 'A great pile of wood is collected, Achilles cuts off a lock, then the nearest to the dead tarried there and piled the wood, and made a pyre a hundred feet high this way and that, and on the pyre's top set the corpse, with anguish at their hearts. And many lusty sheep and shambling crook-horned oxen they flayed and made ready before the pyre, and taking from all of them the fat, great-hearted Achilles wrapped the corpse therein from head to foot, and heaped the flayed bodies round. And he set therein two-handled jars of honey and oil, leaning them against the bier, and four strong-necked horses he threw swiftly on the pyre, and groaned aloud. Nine house-dogs had the dead chief of them did Achilles slay twain and throw them on the pyre. And twelve valiant sons of great-hearted Trojans he slew with the sword, for he devised mischief in his heart — and he set the merciless might of the fire to feed thereon'

877 *Mimir*, the uncle of Odin, who daily draws from the sacred spring the draught which gives him wisdom, and enables him to utter oracles

906 *Odin, thou whirlwind* Frea's speech suggests the wrangling between Zeus and Hera in the first book of the *Iliad*

915 *Ymir* 'In the beginning of time lived Ymir. There was then neither earth, nor hell, nor heaven. Ginnunga gap (chaotic whirlpool) was everywhere, life there was none. The sons of Bor raised the disc of the earth out of the water, and created Midgard.'

1150 *Vidar*, the mysterious son of Odin, who only appears at the Twilight of the Gods. 'As the guardian of justice he survives the catastrophe, and rules after the fall of the great gods.'

### III

## MEMORIAL VERSES

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,  
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease  
But one such death remained to come  
The last poetic voice is dumb  
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,  
We bow'd our head, and held our breath,  
He taught us little but our soul  
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll  
With shivering heart the strife we saw      10  
Of passion with eternal law  
And yet with reverential awe  
We watch'd the fount of fiery life  
Which serv'd for that Titanic strife

When Goethe's death was told, we said—  
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head  
Physician of the non age  
Goethe has done his pilgrimage  
He took the suffering human race,      20  
He read each wound, each weakness clear—  
And struck his finger on the place  
And said—Thou adest here, and here—  
He look'd on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power,

His eye plung'd down the weltering strife.  
 The turmoil of expiring life,  
 He said—The end is everywhere  
 Art still has truth, take refuge there —  
 And he was happy, if to know  
 Causes of things, and far below  
 His feet to see the lurid flow  
 Of terror and insane distress,  
 And headlong fate, be happiness

30

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts' rejoice!  
 For never has such soothing voice  
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,  
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade  
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come  
 Through Hades, and the mournful gloom  
 Wordsworth is gone from us—and ye,  
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we

40

He too upon a wintry clime  
 Had fallen—on this noon time  
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears  
 'He found us when the age had bound  
 Our souls in its benumbing ound  
 He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears  
 He laid us as we lay at birth  
 On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
 Smiles broke from us and we had ease  
 The hills were round us, and the breeze  
 Went o'er the sun-lit fields again.  
 Our foreheads felt the wind and rain  
 Our youth return'd for there was shed  
 On spirits that had long been dead,  
 Spirits dried up and closely fu'd,  
 The freshness of the early world

50

Ah, since dark days still bring to light  
 Man's prudence and man's fiery might,

Time may restore us in his course 60  
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force  
 But where will Europe's latter hour  
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power?  
 Others will teach us how to daie,  
 And against fear our breast to steel,  
 Others will strengthen us to bear—  
 But who, ah who, will make us feel?  
 The cloud of mortal destiny,  
 Others will front it fealessly—  
 But who, like him, will put it by? 70  
 Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,  
 O Rotha! with thy living wave  
 Sing him thy best! for few or none  
 Hears thy voice right, now he is one.

## NOTES

1 Goethe died in 1832 Byron died in 1824, while engaged in helping the Greeks in their struggle for independence Wordsworth died early in 1850, and these verses were written almost immediately afterwards The fifth line ~~was~~ originally written was—

We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb

4 It would be hard to overestimate Wordsworth's greatness as a poet but his was certainly not 'the last poetic voice' At the time of his death Victor Hugo and Browning were in the fullness of their powers, and Tennyson, though his chief works were yet to come, had already proved himself capable of great things

9 Hardly any poet has been so differently estimated as Byron Few would ever have rated him quite as high as Matthew Arnold does in these lines but they indicate well the nature of his greatness, as a thing to be felt rather than to be measured



23, &c Goethe ranks, by common consent, among the very foremost of authors, especially on account of the extraordinarily wide range of his literary powers. His weakest point was what is here described, though in a very sympathetic spirit, his inability to see that the hopes raised by the French Revolution were something better than 'fitful dreams', and that Napoleon's 'feverish power', with the reaction that followed his fall, particularly in Germany, was not really 'Europe's dying hour'.

29, &c These lines are almost a translation of a famous passage in *Virgil—Georg.* ii 490-2

38 Orpheus went down to Hades in search of Eurydice, and by his song persuaded Pluto to allow her return to earth, though on conditions which he failed to fulfil.

42, &c It is impossible to recognize in these lines a fair description of the world of thought, whether political or literary, during Wordsworth's lifetime. It is, however, true that the most marked characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry was his comprehension and love of nature, though this was shared, if in a less degree, by his contemporaries, Coleridge and Shelley and Keats.

72 Rotha is the name of the stream in the Lake country near which Wordsworth lies buried.

## IV

### THE YOUTH OF NATURE

RAIS'D are the dripping oars—  
Silent the boat the lake,  
Lovely and soft as a dream,  
Swims in the sheen of the moon  
The mountains stand at its head  
Clear in the pure June night,  
But the valleys are flooded with haze  
Rydal and Fanfield are there,  
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead  
So it is, so it will be for ay  
Nature is fresh as of old,  
Is lovely a mortal is dead

10

The spots which recall him survive,  
For he lent a new life to these hills  
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields  
That border Enneidale lake,  
And Egremont sleeps by the sea  
The gleam of The Evening Star  
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,  
But ruin'd and solemn and grey  
The sheepfold of Michael survives,  
And far to the south, the heath  
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,  
By the favourite waters of Ruth  
These survive yet not without pain,  
Pain and dejection to-night,  
Can I feel that their poet is gone

20

He grew old in an age he condemn'd  
 He look'd on the rushing decay  
 Of the times which had shelter'd his youth      30  
 Felt the dissolving thrones  
 Of a social order he lov'd  
 Outliv'd his brethren, his peers  
 And, like the Theban seer,  
     Died in his enemies' day

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa  
 Copais lay bright in the moon,  
 Helicon glass'd in the lake  
 Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks  
 Of Parnassus, snowily clear.      40  
 Thebes was behind him in flames,  
 And the clang of arms in his ear,  
 When his awe-struck captors led  
 The Theban seer to the spring  
     Tiresias drank and died  
 Nor did reviving Thebes  
 See such a prophet again

Well may we mourn, when the head  
 Of a sacred poet lies low  
 In an age which can rear them no more      50  
 The complaining millions of men  
 Darken in labour and pain,  
 But he was a priest to us all  
 Of the wonder and bloom of the world,  
 Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad  
 He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day  
 Of his race is past on the earth,  
 And darkness returns to our eyes

For oh, is it you, is it you,  
 Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,      60

And mountains, that fill us with joy,  
 O! the poet who sings you so well?  
 Is it you, O beauty, O grace,  
 O charm, O romance, that we feel,  
 O! the voice which reveals what you are?  
 Are ye, like daylight and sun,  
 Shai'd and rejoic'd in by all?  
 O! are ye immers'd in the mass  
 Of matter, and hard to extract,  
 O! sunk at the core of the world  
 Too deep for the most to discern?  
 Like stars in the deep of the sky,  
 Which arise on the glass of the sage,  
 But are lost when their watcher is gone

70

'They are here'—I heard, as men heard  
 In Mysian Ida the voice  
 Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,  
 The murmur of Nature reply—  
 'Loveliness, magic, and grace,  
 They are here—they are set in the world—  
 They abide—and the finest of souls  
 Has not been thrill'd by them all,  
 Nor the dullest been dead to them quite  
 The poet who sings them may die,  
 But they are immortal, and live,  
 For they are the life of the world  
 Will ye not learn it, and know,  
 When ye mourn that a poet is dead,  
 That the singer was less than his themes,  
 Life, and emotion, and I?

80

90

'More than the singer are these  
 Weak is the tremor of pain  
 That thrills in his mournfullest chord  
 To that which once ran through his soul.

Cold the elation of joy  
 In his gladdest, aniest song,  
 To that which of old in his youth  
 Fill'd him and made him divine  
 Hardly his voice at its best  
 Gives us a sense of the awe, 100  
 The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom  
 Of the unlit gulf of himself

'Ye know not yourselves—and your bards,  
 The clearest the best, who have read  
 Most in themselves, have beheld  
 Less than they left unreveal'd  
 Ye express not yourselves—can ye make  
 With marble, with colour, with word,  
 What charm'd you in others re-live?  
 Can thy pencil, O artist, restore 110  
 The figure, the bloom of thy love,  
 As she was in her morning of spring?  
 Canst thou paint the ineffable smile  
 Of her eyes as they rested on thine?  
 Can the image of life have the glow,  
 The motion of life itself?

'Yourselves and your fellows ye know not—and me  
 The mateless, the one, will ye know?  
 Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell  
 Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast, 120  
 My longing, my sadness, my joy?  
 Will ye claim for your great ones the gift  
 To have render'd the gleam of my skies,  
 To have echoed the moan of my seas,  
 Utter'd the voice of my hills?  
 When your great ones depart, will ye say—  
 "All things have suffer'd a loss—  
 Nature is hid in their grave?"

'Race after race, man after man,  
 Have dream'd that my secret was theirs, 130  
 Have thought that I liv'd but for them,  
 That they were my glory and joy —  
 They are dust, they are chang'd, they are gone  
 I remain '

## NOTES

2 *the lake* is apparently Grasmere this is in the immediate neighbourhood of Wordsworth's home

8 Rydal and Fairfield, Enneidale and Egremont are all names belonging to the Lake district, where Wordsworth lived the greater part of his life

18-21 Michael was the subject of one of Wordsworth's early poems he was a shepherd near Grasmere His cottage was so situated high on the hill side, that the light from it in the evening could be seen all over the vale of Grasmere Hence it was given the name of The Evening Star 'The sheepfold' of stones he tried to build with his own hands, but left unfinished at his death

24 Ruth was the subject of another poem having been deserted by her husband, she lived a solitary life among the Quantock hills in Somersetshire

28, &c Matthew Arnold is here apparently ascribing to Wordsworth his own feelings of dislike to the spirit of the age Like many other Englishmen, Wordsworth had been attracted by the early promise of the French revolutionary movement, and alienated by its later excesses During the remainder of his life his writings scarcely touched on social or political matters He had long outlived the first contemptuous criticisms of the poetry of the Lake school, though he had also outlived the other members of it, his brethren, if hardly his peers Nor is there any reason to say that he loved the only thing in the social order of his youth which decayed in his later years, the political and social preponderance of the English aristocracy, greatly diminished by the Reform Act of 1832

34, &c Tiresias was the blind prophet of Thebes. There are several legends about him, but all connect his blindness with his acquiring prophetic powers. He is said to have died beside the spring of Tilphusa, after his native town had been captured by enemies.

37 Copais is a lake in Boeotia near Thebes. Helicon is a mountain ridge between Lake Copais and the Corinthian Gulf, supposed to be a favourite haunt of the Muses. Parnassus, the great mountain near Delphi, is somewhat farther off.

56 See note on III 4

72 Many stars are invisible to the naked eye on account of their immense distance, and are only visible through a telescope.

77 Rhea, the mother of the gods, was specially worshipped in Crete, and was said to have given birth to Zeus on Mount Ida in that island. As the Greeks grew familiar with Asia Minor, Rhea came to be identified with the Phrygian nature goddess Cybele, also known as 'the great mother'. Her worship was carried on in many places in Asia Minor, amongst them on the other Mount Ida in Mysia, which overlooks the plain of Troy.

## THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill,  
 Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes  
 No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,  
 Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,  
 Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head  
 But when the fields are still,  
 And the tined men and dogs all gone to rest,  
 And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
 Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,  
 Come, shepherd, and again renew the quest 10

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,  
 In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves  
 His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruise,  
 And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,  
 Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use,  
 Here will I sit and wait,  
 While to my ear from uplands far away  
 The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,  
 With distant cries of reapers in the corn—  
 All the live murmur of a summer's day 20

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,  
 And here till sun-down, shepherd, will I be  
 Through the thick coin the scarlet poppies peep,  
 And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
 Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep  
 And air swept lindens yield  
 Their scent, and rustle down their perfum'd showers  
 Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
 And bow me from the August sun with shade,  
 And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers 30



And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—  
Come, let me read the oft read tale again,  
The story of that Oxford scholar poor  
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,  
Who, tu'd of knocking at preferment's door,  
One summer morn forsook  
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy lore,  
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,  
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,  
But came to Oxford and his friends no more 40

But once, years after in the country lanes.  
Two scholars whom at college eist he knew  
Met him, and of his way of life enqun'd  
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy crew,  
His mates, had arts to rule as they desu'd  
The workings of men's brains,  
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will  
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art  
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart  
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill ' 50

This said, he left them, and return'd no more,  
But rumours hung about the country side  
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,  
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,  
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey  
The same the gipsies wore  
Shepherds had met him on the Huist in spring  
At some lone alehouse in the Berks shire moors,  
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-flock'd boots  
Had found him seated at their entering, 60

But, mid then dink and clatter, he would fly  
 And I myself seem half to know thy looks,  
 And put the shepherds, wanderer, on thy trace,  
 And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks  
 I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place,  
 Or in my boat I lie  
 Moo'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,  
 Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,  
 And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,  
 And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats 70

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground  
 Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,  
 Returning home on summer nights, have met  
 Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
 Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
 As the slow punt swings round  
 And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,  
 And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
 Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,  
 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream 80

And then they land, and thou art seen no more  
 Maidens who from the distant hamlets come  
 To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,  
 Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,  
 Or cross a stile into the public way  
 Oft thou hast given them store  
 Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone—  
 Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eyes—  
 And purple orchises with spotted leaves—  
 But none has words she can report of thee 90

And, above Godstow bridge, when hay-time's here  
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,  
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass  
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering  
Thames,  
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
Have often pass'd thee near  
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown  
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,  
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air,  
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert gone 100

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,  
Where at her open door the housewife dawns,  
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate  
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns  
Children, who early range these slopes and late  
For cresses from the ills,  
Have known thee watching, all an April day,  
The springing pastures and the feeding kine,  
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,  
Through the long dewy grass move slow away 110

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,  
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edg'd way  
Pitch their smok'd tents, and every bush you see  
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,  
Above the forest ground call'd Thessaly—  
The blackbird picking food  
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all,  
So often has he known thee past him stray  
Rapt, twining in thy hand a wither'd spray,  
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall 120

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
 Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go  
 Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge  
 Wiapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,  
 Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge?  
 And thou hast climb'd the hill  
 And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range, \*  
 Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,  
 The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—  
 Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange 130

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown  
 Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,  
 And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe  
 That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls  
 To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy tribe  
 And thou from earth art gone  
 Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid,  
 Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave  
 Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—  
 Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade 140

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours  
 For what wears out the life of mortal men?  
 'Tis that from change to change then being rolls  
 'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
 Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,  
 And numb the elastic powers  
 Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and teen,  
 And tur'd upon a thousand schemes our wit,  
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
 Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been 150

Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou perish, so ?  
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire  
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead—  
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire  
The generations of thy peers are fled,  
And we ourselves shall go,  
But thou possessest an immortal lot,  
And we imagine thee exempt from age  
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,  
Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have not ! 160

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers  
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,  
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things,  
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,  
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled  
brings  
O life unlike to ours !  
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
Of whom each starves, nor knows for what he strives,  
And each half lives a hundred different lives,  
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope 170

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven and we,  
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,  
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,  
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,  
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd,  
For whom each year we see  
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new,  
Who hesitate and falter life away,  
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—  
Ah, do not we, wanderer, await it too ? 180

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,  
 And then we suffer, and amongst us one,  
 Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly  
 His seat upon the intellectual throne,  
 And all his store of sad experience he  
 Lays bare of wretched days,  
 Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,  
 And how the dying spark of hope was fed,  
 And how the breast was sooth'd, and how the head,  
 And all his hourly varied anodynes 190

This for our wisest and we others pine,  
 And wish the long unhappy dream would end,  
 And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear  
 With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,  
 Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair  
 But none has hope like thine  
 Thou through the fields and through the woods dost  
 stray,  
 Roaming the country side, a truant boy,  
 Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,  
 And every doubt long blown by time away 200

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,  
 And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames,  
 Before this strange disease of modern life,  
 With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
 Its heads o'er-tax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—  
 Fly hence, our contact fear!  
 Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!  
 Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
 From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
 Wave us away, and keep thy solitude 210

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,  
 Still clutching the inviolable shade  
     With a free onward impulse brushing through,  
 By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—  
     Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue,  
     On some mild pastoral slope  
 Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,  
     Fresken thy flowers, as in former years,  
     With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,  
 From the dark dingles, to the musingales 220

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!  
 For strong the infection of our mental strife,  
     Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest,  
 And we should win thee from thy own fair life,  
     Like us distracted, and like us unblest  
     Soon, soon thy cheer would die,  
 Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,  
     And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made  
     And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,  
 Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours 230

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!  
 —As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,  
     Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
 Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,  
     The fringes of a southward-facing brow  
     Among the Aegean isles  
 And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
     Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,  
     Green bursting figs, and tummies steep'd in brine,  
 And knew the intruders on his ancient home, 240

The young light-hearted Masters of the waves,  
 And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,  
 And day and night held on indignantly  
 O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,  
 Betwixt the Sytes and soft Sicily,  
 To where the Atlantic raves  
 Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails  
 There, where down cloudy cliffs through sheets  
 of foam,  
 Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come,  
 And on the beach undid his corded bales

250

## NOTES

This poem is founded on the following story, given in GLANVILLE'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) 'There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies, and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others. That himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.



The poet imagines that the Scholar Gipsy continued to be seen at intervals in the places that he had frequented in life, which are assumed to be all in the neighbourhood of Oxford. Much of the first half of the poem consists of descriptions of the scenery of this region, where the author was in the habit of walking with his friend Clough (see the next poem).

The annexed map shows all the places named in the two poems, except Wychwood Forest (l. 79), which is at some distance to the north-west, and Ilsley Downs (Thyrsis, 14), which are to the south.

Follow on the map the road which runs from the city westward, and then south-westward. About two miles out, across the Berkshire frontier, stands a piece of rising ground called Cumnor Hurst (the 'Hurst' of l. 57), and just beyond it the village of Cumnor (see ll. 69, 101, and 127), famous for the story of Amy Robsart (see Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*). Another stretch of two miles or so, in the same direction, leads to the ferry of Bablock-hythe (l. 74), where the 'promontory' of Berkshire ends and the traveller crosses into Oxfordshire again. The forest of Wychwood (l. 79) is in this part of Oxfordshire, to the west and north-west of Witney.

A few miles south of Bablock-hythe is Fyfield (l. 83), which lies almost directly south-west of Oxford.

Return towards the city until you once more arrive at Cumnor, then strike away to the right and you will pass the village of South Hinksey mentioned in l. 125. The low-lying fields, often flooded in winter, are still traversed by the causeway mentioned in l. 121. Close by South Hinksey runs the road from Oxford to Abingdon, passing through Bagley Wood (l. 111).

So far all the places mentioned have been, with one exception, to the south and south-west of Oxford. One still remains, the bridge (l. 91) of Godstow (there is practically no village) close to the ruined nunnery of Godstow, famous for the story of Fair Rosamond. This is situated nearly north of the city, almost two miles distant.

It may be added that the place from which the poem is supposed to be written is the upland that lies between Hinksey and Cumnor, from which one of the finest views of Oxford is to be seen. One of its conspicuous features is the Hall of Christ Church (l. 129), especially in the evening when the long line of windows is lighted up.

2 *wattled*. Anything is said to be wattled which is made by interlacing slips or logs of wood, such as a huddle.

*cotes*, sheep pens The Cotswold hills take the first part of their name from this word

9 *moon-blanch'd*, pale in the moonlight

13 *cruse*, or *cruse*, a pitcher It is the same word as the German *krug* and the English *crook* and *cockery* It is probably of Celtic origin Cf 'a little oil in a cruse,' 1 Kings xvii 12

26 *lindens*, the lime tree (Ger *linde*) The two words may possibly be originally identical The modern use of the word *linden* is, however, a conscious borrowing from the German

The lime flower is over before August but the picture is of field sights and scents in the height of summer, and it is perhaps only a reasonable license to group things which are not exactly simultaneous Tennyson does the same in his famous lyric on autumn

37. *lore*, learning, derived from the Gothic *laus*, to find out compare *non* from *eisen*

45 The gipsies have always been popularly credited with mysterious powers, such as foretelling fortunes, and have no doubt sometimes believed in themselves

59 *ingle bench*, i.e. the bench by the chimney-corner The word *ingle* is of obscure origin, usually identified with Gael *aingeal*, fire, light

*Smock-frock*, a long white frock which used to be frequently (and is still sometimes) worn by farmers and farm-labourers Its name is derived from the A.S. *smūgan*, to creep through a hole, because the wearer has to draw it over his head and 'creep through' the neckhole

69 *green-muffled muff* means a warm soft covering hence applied to the long grass in the summer fields

74 *stripling Thames* The stream which rises on the eastern slope of the Cotswolds, and flows thence to Oxford, is always reckoned to be the true source of the Thames, though about Oxford it is known as the Isis The Evenlode joins it above the city, the Cherwell just below, and thence onwards it is a considerable river Some miles lower down the Tame flows into it, also on the north side The supposed derivation of Thames (Latin *Tamesis*) from fusion of the two names Tame and Isis, referred to by Spenser in the *Faery Queene* (Bk IV Cant II), is etymologically impossible

76 *the slow punt swings round* Matthew Arnold's ear for verbal music was not always correct In a later edition,

he altered this phrase into *the punt's rope chops round*, which is not more accurate, and far less euphonious

83 The old May-day customs, and especially the May-day dance, are still kept up in some parts of Oxfordshire and Berkshire

95 *lasher* The water that rushes through an opening in a weir, hence the opening itself, or, as here, the pool into which the water falls The word is in common use on the Thames, but is hardly known elsewhere It is apparently only a coincidence that it resembles the French verb *lâcher*, to let go

115 *Thessaly* This name must have been a fancy of Matthew Arnold and his friends, possibly from the shape of the piece of ground There is nothing to show exactly which spot was intended

120 *the spark from Heaven* For the explanation of this phrase, see ll 45-50

147. *teen*, sorrow An Anglo-Saxon word long obsolete

182 *one, who most has suffer'd* There is nothing to show what person Matthew Arnold had in his mind The description suits Carlyle, whose literary eminence was very great, who was pessimistic about things in general, and far from reticent about his own personal troubles

190 *anodynes* Remedies to deaden pain The word is of Greek origin, like a large proportion of our scientific terms

208 Virgil (*Aen* vi 450-71) makes Aeneas, on his visit to Hades, encounter Dido queen of Carthage, whose lover he had been, and who had committed suicide on his deserting her He addresses her, trying to excuse himself, but she will not reply, or even look at him

242, &c The trade of the Mediterranean was in the hands of the Phoenicians, whose chief city was Tyre, before the Greeks had become sufficiently civilized for commerce Then gradually the Greeks ousted the Phoenicians from the eastern half, but they retained their preponderance in the western part, their headquarters being at Carthage, a colony from Tyre, situated on the African coast just south of Sicily They carried their commerce to the coasts of Spain, and out into the Atlantic, where they founded Cadiz The effect of the passage is heightened by the poetical device of making the representatives of the youthful Grecian race, now rising to preponderance, themselves youthful, and the Tyrian trader, who is being driven out, a man of mature years.

## VI

### THYRSIS

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills '  
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same ,  
The village-street its haunted mansion lacks,  
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,  
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks  
Are ye too changed, ye hills?  
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men  
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays '  
Here came I often, often, in old days ,  
Thyrsis and I, we still had Thyrsis then 10

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth farm,  
Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree crowns  
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?  
The Signal-Elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,  
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful  
Thames?—  
This winter-eve is warm,  
Humid the air, leafless, yet soft as spring,  
The tender purple spray on copse and briers ,  
And that sweet city with her dreaming spires  
She needs not June for beauty's heightening, 20

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to night  
 Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power  
 Befalls me wandering through this upland dim  
 Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour,  
 Now seldom come I, since I came with him  
 That single elm-tree bright  
 'Against the west—I miss it' is it gone?  
 We prized it dearly, while it stood, we said,  
 Our friend, the Scholau-Gipsy, was not dead,  
 While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on 30

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!  
 But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick,  
 And with the country-folk acquaintance made  
 By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick  
 Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd  
 Ah me! this many a year  
 My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday  
 Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart  
 Into the world and wave of men depart,  
 But Thyrsis of his own will went away 40

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest  
 He loved each simple joy the country yields,  
 He loved his mates, but yet he could not keep,  
 For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,  
 Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep  
 Some life of men unblest  
 He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head  
 He went, his piping took a troubled sound  
 Of storms that rage outside our happy ground,  
 He could not wait then passing, he is dead 50

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,  
 When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,  
 Before the roses and the longest day—  
 When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,  
 With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,  
 And chestnut-flowers are strewn—  
 So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
 From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,  
 Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze  
*The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I* 60

Too quick desparer, wherefore wilt thou go?  
 Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,  
 Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,  
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,  
 Sweet-William with its homely cottage smell,  
 And stocks in fragrant blow;  
 Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
 And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
 And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,  
 And the full moon, and the white evening-star 70

He hearkens not! light come, he is gone!  
 What matters it? next year he will return,  
 And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,  
 With whitening hedges, and uncumpling fern,  
 And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,  
 And scent of hay new-mown  
 But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see,  
 See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,  
 And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—  
 For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee! 80

Alack, for Corydon no rival now !  
 But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,  
 Some good survivor with his flute would go,  
 Piping a ditty sad for Bion's mate,  
 And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,  
 And unbend Pluto's brow,  
 And make leap up with joy the beauteous head  
 Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair  
 Are flowers, first open'd on Sicilian air ,  
 And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead 90

O easy access to the heaver's grace,  
 When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine !  
 For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,  
 She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,  
 She knew each lily white which Enna yields,  
 Each rose with blushing face ,  
 She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain  
 But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard !  
 Her foot the Cumner cowslips never staid ,  
 And we should tease her with our plaint in vain ! 100

Well ! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,  
 Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour  
 In the old haunt, and find our tree topp'd hill !  
 Who, if not I, for questing here hath power ?  
 I know the wood which hides the daffodil,  
 I know the Fyfield tree,  
 I know what white, what purple fritillaries  
 The grassy harvest of the river-fields,  
 Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,  
 And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries , 110

I know these slopes, who knows them if not I?—  
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,  
 With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,  
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and, far descried,  
 High tower'd the spikes of purple oichises,  
 Hath since our day put by  
 The coronals of that forgotten time,  
 Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's  
 team,  
 And only in the hidden brookside gleam  
 Pimperns, orphans of the flowery prime 120

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,  
 Above the locks, above the boating throng,  
 Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the Wytham flats,  
 Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,  
 And darting swallows, and light water-gnats,  
 We tack'd the shy Thames shore?  
 Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell  
 Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,  
 Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?  
 They all are gone, and thou art gone as well 130

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night  
 In ever-nearing circle waves her shade  
 I see her veil draw soft across the day,  
 I feel her slowly chilling breath invade  
 The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with  
 grey,  
 I feel her finger light  
 Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;  
 The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,  
 The heart less bounding at emotion new,  
 And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again 140



And long the way appears, which seem'd so short  
 To the unpractised eye of sanguine youth,  
 And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,  
 The mountain-tops where is the throne of truth  
 Tops in life's morning sun so bright and bare  
 Unbreachable the fort  
 'Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall,  
 And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,  
 And near and real the charm of thy repose,  
 And night as welcome as a friend would fall 150

But hush ! the upland hath a sudden loss  
 Of quiet ;—Look ! adown the dusk hill-side,  
 A troop of Oxford hunters going home  
 As in old days, jovial and talking, ride  
 From hunting with the Berkshure hounds they come  
 Quick ! let me fly, and cross  
 Into yon further field !—'Tis done, and see,  
 Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify  
 The orange and pale violet evening-sky.  
 Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree ! the Tree ! 160

I take the omen ! Eve lets down her veil,  
 The white fog creeps from bush to bush about.  
 The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright  
 And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out  
 I cannot reach the Signal-Tree to night,  
 Yet, happy omen, hail !  
 Hear it from thy broad lucent Aino vale  
 (For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep  
 The morningless and unawakening sleep  
 Under the flowery oleanders pale), 170

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our Tree is there !—  
 Ah, vain ! These English fields, this upland dim,  
 These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,  
 That lone, sky-pointed Tree, are not for him.  
 To a boon southern country he is fled,  
 And now in happier air,  
 Wandering with the great Mother's train divine  
 (And purer or more subtle soul than thee,  
 I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see !)  
 Within a folding of the Apennine, 180

Thou hearest the immortal strains of old.  
 Putting his sickle to the perilous gr n,  
 In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,  
 For thee the Lityerses song again  
 Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing,  
 Sings his Sicilian fold,  
 His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes,  
 And how a call celestial round him rang,  
 And heavenward from the fountain-bank he sprang,  
 And all the marvel of the golden skies 190

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here,  
 Sole in these fields, yet will I not despair  
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry  
 Neath the soft canopy of English air  
 That lonely Tree against the western sky.  
 Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,  
 Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee !  
 Fields where the sheep from cages pull the hay,  
 Woods with anemones in flower till May,  
 Know him a wanderer still, then why not me ? 200

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,  
 Shy to illumine, and I seek it too  
 This does not come with houses or with gold,  
 With place, with honour, and a flattering ciew,  
 'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold  
 But the smooth-slipping weeks  
 Drop by, and leave its seeker still untuned  
 Out of the heed of mortals is he gone,  
 He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone,  
 Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired 210

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wert bound,  
 Thou wanderest with me for a little hour  
 Men gave thee nothing, but this happy quest,  
 If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,  
 If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest  
 And this rude Cumner ground,  
 Its fir-topped Huist, its fairs, its quiet fields,  
 Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,  
 Here was thine height of strength, thy golden  
 prime,  
 And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields. 220

What though the music of thy rustic flute  
 Kept not for long its happy, country tone,  
 Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note  
 Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,  
 Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy  
 throat—  
 It fail'd, and thou wert mute  
 Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,  
 And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,  
 And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,  
 Left human haunt, and on alone till night 230

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!  
 'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,  
 Thyrsis, in reach of sheep-bells, is my home  
 Then through the great town's haish, heart-wearying  
 1001,  
 Let in thy voice a whisper often come,  
 To chase fatigue and fear  
*Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died*  
*Roam on, the light we sought is shining still*  
*Dost thou ask proof? Our Tree yet crowns the hill,*  
*Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side* 240

## NOTES

THIS poem was written in memory of the author's friend Arthur Hugh Clough, who died in 1861. There are references all through to the previous poem, *The Scholar Gypsy*, and especially to the scenery described in it, where the two friends had been in the habit of walking together.

11 *Childsworth*, spelt on the modern maps Childwell

14 *The Signal-Elm*. There is no tree which corresponds exactly in all respects to the many indications given in these two poems. In particular there is none from which both the Hsley Downs and the 'three lone wears' (now removed and two of them replaced by locks) of the upper Thames can be seen together. The tree which on the whole suits the allusions best is an oak, though its form is such that at a little distance it may easily be mistaken for an elm. The position of this is shown on the map. Everything which the poet describes can be seen from one point or another of the high ground, south-west of Oxford, extending from Cummo Hurst to Boar's Hill, which after all is not far. It is needless to speculate whether his memory played him false, or whether he allowed himself the not uncommon poetic licence of bringing together things separated by a small interval of distance or time.

40 Clough left Oxford in 1848 he was apparently not satisfied that he was doing good work there, and was also uneasy about professing conformity to the Church of England as a College tutor then was obliged to do. He tried more than one other sphere of work, before his health gave way. His friend Matthew Arnold all through this poem suggests a certain similarity between Clough and the Scholar Gipsy, whose story both had been much interested

57 *the cuckoo's parting cry* The cuckoo does not leave this country in early June. The old popular rhyme about the cuckoo is substantially correct—

In March he leaves his perch,  
In April come he will,  
In May he sings all day,  
In June he changes his tune,  
In July he's ready to fly,  
In August go he must

74 *uncrumpling fern* The undeveloped fern leaves look as if they had been forcibly crumpled up. As they grow towards maturity they straighten themselves out.

80 Corydon and Thyrsis contend in verse against one another in Virgil, *Eclogue vii*, and Corydon is declared to be the winner.

84 Bion was a Sicilian poet of the second century B.C., upon whose early death his friend Moschus wrote an elegy. The suggestion is that, as Orpheus went down to the underworld in order by his song to recover his lost bride Eurydice, so this elegy was an attempt to recall Bion to life.

88\* Proserpine, the queen of the underworld, was, according to the legend, carried off by Pluto while gathering flowers at Enna in Sicily, and so it is suggested that she would be specially ready to listen to pleadings from Sicilians.

107 The fritillary grows in great profusion in some of the fields bordering the Thames, especially between Iffley and Sandford. Generally speaking, it is a rare flower.

124 Loosestrife is the name given to two very similar plants, one with yellow flowers (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), the other with red (*Lythrum salicaria*). The name is an inaccurate translation from the former, which apparently was derived from a person.

167 Clough died at Florence, which is on the Arno.

177 *great Mother* See note on IV 77

185 Daphnis is one of the stock names in Greek pastoral poetry, and perhaps may be said to be the ideal Greek name for a shepherd. There are two stories told of a shepherd bearing that name, which are here blended into one. The first was that he was blinded by a nymph because he would not love her, and was restored to sight and taken up to heaven by Mercury. The other was that he forfeited his life in a contest with Lityerses, a Phrygian king, who made all strangers compete with himself in reaping corn, and was rescued by Hercules.

The Lityerses story was given in more forms than one in the harvest songs of Asia Minor. There were many such songs, and other ritual practices, all of them representing, though in very various ways, the annual revival of nature and its productiveness in harvest. A very full account of them is given in Frazer's *Golden Bough*, vol. II.

225 Most of Clough's poems were written early in his life.

## VII

### RUGBY CHAPEL

COLDLY, sadly descends  
The autumn evening The field  
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,  
Fade into dimness apace,  
Silent,—hardly a shout  
From a few boys late at their play!  
The lights come out in the street,  
In the school-room windows, but cold  
Solemn, unlighted, austere, 10  
Through the gathering darkness, arise  
The chapel walls, in whose bound  
Thou, my father! art laid

There thou dost lie, in the gloom  
Of the autumn evening But ah!  
That word, *gloom*, to my mind  
Brings thee back in the light  
Of thy radiant vigour again!  
In the gloom of November we pass'd  
Days not of gloom at thy side, 20  
Seasons impair'd not the ray  
Of thine even cheerfulness clear  
Such thou wast, and I stand  
In the autumn evening, and think  
Of bygone autumns with thee

Fifteen years have gone round  
 Since thou aroosest to tread,  
 In the summer morning, the road  
 Of death, at a call unforeseen,  
 Sudden ! For fifteen years, 30  
 We who till then in thy shade  
 Rested as under the boughs  
 Of a mighty oak, have endured  
 Sunshine and rain as we might,  
 Bare, unshaded, alone,  
 Lacking the shelter of thee  
 O strong soul, by what shoit  
 Tarriest thou now ? For that force,  
 Surely, has not been left vain !  
 Somewhere, surely, afar, 40  
 In the sounding labour-house vast  
 Of being, is practised that strength,  
 Zealous, beneficent, firm !

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,  
 Conscious or not of the past,  
 Still thou performest the word  
 Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live,—  
 Prompt, unwearied, as here !  
 Still thou upraiest with zeal  
 The humble good from the ground, 50  
 Sternly represses the bad !  
 Still like a trumpet, dost rouse  
 Those who with half-open eyes  
 Tread the border-land dim  
 'Twixt vice and virtue, reviv'st,  
 Succourest !—this was thy work,  
 This was thy life upon earth

What is the course of the life  
 Of mortal men on the earth ?—



Most men eddy about 60  
 Here and there—eat and drink,  
 Chatter and love and hate,  
 Gather and squander, are raised  
 Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
 Striving blindly, achieving  
 Nothing, and, then they die—  
 Perish, and no one asks  
 Who or what they have been,  
 More than he asks what waves  
 In the moonlit solitudes mild 70  
 Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,  
 Foam'd for a moment, and gone

And there are some, whom a thrust  
 Ardent, unquenchable, fires,  
 Not with the crowd to be spent,—  
 Not without aim to go round  
 In an eddy of purposeless dust,  
 Effort unmeaning and vain  
 Ah yes! some of us strive  
 Not without action to die 80  
 Fruitless, but something to snatch  
 From dull oblivion, nor all  
 Glut the devouring grave!  
 We, we have chosen our path—  
 Path to a clear-purposed goal,  
 Path of advance! but it leads  
 A long, steep journey, through sunk  
 Gorges, o'er mountains in snow!  
 Cheerful, with friends, we set forth,  
 Then, on the height, comes the storm! 90  
 Thunder crashes from rock  
 To rock the cataracts reply,  
 Lightnings dazzle our eyes,  
 Roaring torrents have bleach'd

The track, the stream-bed descends  
 In the place where the wayfare once  
 Planted his footstep—the spray  
 Boils o'er its borders 'aloft,  
 The unseen snow-beds dislodge  
 Their hanging run,—alas, 100  
 Havoc is made in our train!  
 Friends who set forth at our side  
 Falter, are lost in the storm!  
 We, we only, are left!  
 With frowning foreheads, with lips  
 Sternly compress'd, we strain on,  
 On—and at nightfall, at last,  
 Come to the end of our way  
 To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks,  
 Where the gaunt and taciturn host 110  
 Stands on the threshold, the wind  
 Shaking his thin white hairs—  
 Holds his lantern to scan  
 Our storm-beat figures, and asks  
 Whom in our party we bring?  
 Whom we have left in the snow?  
 Sadly we answer We bring  
 Only ourselves! we lost  
 Sight of the rest in the storm  
 Hardly ourselves we fought through, 120  
 Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.  
 Friends, companions, and train  
 The avalanche swept from our side  
 But thou would'st not *alone*  
 Be saved, my father! *alone*  
 Conquer and come to thy goal,  
 Leaving the rest in the wild  
 We were weary, and we  
 Fearful, and we, in our march,

Fain to drop down and to die. 130  
 Still thou turnedst, and still  
 Beckonedst the trembler, and still  
 Gavest the weary thy hand !  
 If, in the paths of the world,  
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,  
 Toil or dejection have tried  
 Thy spirit, of that we saw  
 Nothing ! to us thou wert still  
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm  
 Therefore to thee it was given 140  
 Many to save with thyself,  
 And, at the end of thy day,  
 O faithful shepherd ! to come,  
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe  
 In the noble and great, who are gone ;  
 Pure souls honour'd and blest  
 By former age, who else—  
 Such, so soulless, so poor,  
 Is the race of men whom I see— 150  
 Seem'd but a dream of the heart,  
 Seem'd but a cry of desire  
 Yes ! I believe that there lived  
 Others like thee in the past,  
 Not like the men of the crowd  
 Who all round me to-day  
 Bluster or cunge, and make life  
 Hideous, and aid, and vile,  
 But souls temper'd with fire,  
 Fervent, heroic, and good, 160  
 Helps and friends of mankind.

Servants of God !—O sons  
 Shall I not call you ? because

Not as servants ye knew  
 Your Father's innermost mind,  
 His, who unwillingly sees  
 One of his little ones lost—  
 Yours is the praise, if mankind  
 Hath not as yet in its march  
 Fainted, and fallen, and died ' , 176

See ' in the rocks of the world  
 Marches the host of mankind,  
 A feeble, wavering line  
 Where are they tending?—A God  
 Marshall'd them, gave them their goal—  
 Ah, but the way is so long!  
 Years they have been in the wild!  
 Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,  
 Rising all round, overawe  
 Factions divide them, their host 180  
 Threatens to break, to dissolve  
 Ah, keep, keep them combined!  
 Else, of the myriads who fill  
 That army, not one shall arrive!  
 Sole they shall stay, in the rocks  
 Labour for ever in vain,  
 Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need  
 Of you fainting, dispirited race,  
 Ye, like angels, appear, 190  
 Radiant with ardour divine.  
 Beacons of hope, ye appear!  
 Language is not in your heart,  
 Weakness is not in your word,  
 Weariness not on your brow  
 Ye alight in our van! at your voice,  
 Panic, despair, flee away

Ye move through the ranks, recall  
 The straggleis, refresh the outworn,  
 Praise, re-inspire the brave. 200  
 Order, courage, return,  
 Eyes rekindling, and prayers,  
 Follow your steps as ye go  
 Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
 Strengthen the wavering line,  
 Stablish, continue our march,  
 On, to the bound of the waste,  
 On, to the City of God

## NOTES

Matthew Arnold's father was the famous Dr Thomas Arnold, head master of Rugby, whose power for good in remodelling English public school life cannot be overstated. He died after two or three hours' illness on Sunday, June 12, 1842, just before completing his forty-seventh year, and lies buried in Rugby Chapel. The nature and value of the influence which he exerted over his pupils are admirably described in the poem.

44sq This idea is expressed by Tennyson in somewhat different form in lines 255-66 of his *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, a more conspicuous, but hardly a greater man.

## VIII

### LYRICAL POEMS

#### 1 REQUIESCAT

STREW on her roses, roses,  
And never a spray of yew !  
In quiet she reposes  
Ah, would that I did too !

Her mirth the world required  
She bath'd it in smiles of glee  
But her heart was tired, tired,  
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,  
In mazes of heat and sound ;  
But for peace her soul was yearning,  
And now peace laps her round.

10

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,  
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.  
To-night it doth inherit  
The vasty hall of death

## 2. PARTING

YE storm-winds of Autumn!  
 Who rush by, who shake  
 The window, and ruffle  
 The gleam-lighted lake,  
 Who cross to the hill-side  
 Thin-spinkled with fairs,  
 Where the high woods strip sadly  
 Then yellowing aims—

Ye are bound for the mountains!  
 Ah, with you let me go  
 Where your cold distant banner,  
 The vast range of snow,  
 Through the loose clouds lifts dimly  
 Its white peaks in air—  
 How deep is then stillness!  
 Ah! would I were there!

10

Hark! fast by the window  
 The rushing winds go,  
 To the ice-cumber'd gorges,  
 The vast seas of snow  
 There the torrents drive upward  
 Their rock-strangled hum,  
 There the avalanche thunders  
 The hoarse torrent dumb  
 —I come, O ye mountains!  
 Ye torrents, I come!

20

Hark! the wind rushes past us!  
 Ah! with that let me go  
 To the clear waning hill-side,  
 Unspotted by snow,

30

There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,  
 The frore mountain wall,  
 Where the niched snow-bed sprays down  
 Its powdery fall  
 There its dusky blue clusters  
 The aconite spreads;  
 There the pines slope, the cloud-strips  
 Hung soft in their heads  
 No life but, at moments,  
 The mountain-bee's hum  
 —I come, O ye mountains!  
 Ye pine-woods, I come!

40

Blow, ye winds! lift me with you!  
 I come to the wild  
 Fold closely, O Nature!  
 Thine arms round thy child

To thee only God granted  
 A heart ever new.  
 To all always open,  
 To all always true

50

Ah, calm me! restore me!  
 And dry up my tears  
 On thy high mountain platforms,  
 Where morn first appears,

Where the white mists, for ever,  
 Are spread and upful'd,  
 In the stir of the forces  
 Whence issued the world



## THE LAST WORD

CREEP into thy narrow bed,  
 Creep, and let no more be said !  
 Vain thy onset ! all stands f t,  
 Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease !  
 Geese are swans, and swans are geese  
 Let them have it how they will !  
 Thou art tired, best be still

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee  
 Better men fared thus before thee, 10  
 Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,  
 Hotly charged—and broke at last

Charge once more, then, and be dumb !  
 Let the victors, when they come,  
 When the forts of folly fall,  
 Find thy body by the wall

## 4 MORALITY

WE cannot kindle when we will  
 The fire that in the heart resides,  
 The spirit bloweth and is still,  
 In mystery our soul abides  
 But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet  
 We dig and heap, lay stone on stone,  
 We bear the burden and the heat  
 Of the long day, and wish 'twere done 10  
 Not till the hours of light return  
 All we have built do we discern

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,  
 When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,  
 Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,  
 Thy struggling task'd morality—

Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,  
 Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,  
 Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek, 20  
 See, on her face a glow is spread,  
 A strong emotion on her cheek

'Ah child,' she cries, 'that strife divine—  
 Whence was it, for it is not mine?

'There is no effort on *my* brow—

I do not strive, I do not weep

I rush with the swift spheres, and glow

In joy, and when I will, I sleep —

Yet that severe, that earnest air,

I saw, I felt it once—but where? 30

'I knew not yet the gauge of time,

Nor wore the manacles of space

I felt it in some other clime,

I saw it in some other place

—'Twas when the heavenly house I trod.

And lay upon the breast of God'

## 5 SONG FROM EMPEDOCLES

THROUGH the black, rushing smoke-bursts,

Thick breaks the red flame,

All Etna heaves fiercely

Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo!

Aie haunts meet for thee

But, where Helicon breaks down

In cliff to the sea,

## SONG FROM EMPEDOCLES

137

Where the moon-silver'd inlets  
Send far then light voice 10  
Up the still vale of Thisbe,  
O speed, and rejoice !

On the sward at the cliff-top  
Lie strewn the white flocks ,  
On the cliff-side the pigeons  
Roost deep in the rocks

In the moonlight the shepherds,  
Soft lull'd by the rills,  
Lie wrapt in their blankets,  
Asleep on the hills 20

—What forms are these coming  
So white through the gloom ?  
What garments out-glistening  
The gold-flower'd broom ?

What sweet-breathing presence  
Out perfumes the thyme ?  
What voices' enrapture  
The night's balmy pume ?—

'Tis Apollo comes leading  
His chon, the Nine 30  
—The leader is fairest,  
But all are divine

They are lost in the hollows !  
They stream up again !  
What seeks on this mountain  
The glorified train ?—

They bathe on this mountain,  
In the spring by their road  
Then on to Olympus,  
Their endless abode ! 40

—Whose praise do they mention?  
 Of what is it told?—  
 What will be for ever,  
 What was from of old

First hymn they the Father  
 Of all things, and then  
 The rest of immortals,  
 The action of men

The day in his hotness,  
 The strife with the palms, 50  
 The night in her silence,  
 The stars in their calm.

## NOTES

### 2

These stanzas are extracted from one of a series of short love poems, collectively entitled *Sintzelund*

13 In stormy weather one may often catch glimpses of a distant range of snow mountains, even when the clouds make it impossible to distinguish the separate peaks

22 Torrents in the high Alps are apt to flow at the bottom of deep and narrow gorges, which they have worn for themselves in the course of ages and the roar of the water, deafening down in the gorge, may be little heard at a short distance off

27 sq This stanza apparently describes the view from the Wengern Alp, which with its southern aspect remains 'unspotted by snow' till actual winter sets in. Beyond a narrow but very deep valley rises the Jungfrau, on which below the dark cliffs of the actual peak is a broad shelf of *névé* (snow being gradually transformed into ice). The outer edge of this shelf abuts on a great wall of rock, the top of which rises into points, so that the snow behind it is only seen here and there, in what the poet calls niches. At these points, when the pressure from behind has pushed the edges of the *névé* bed over the edge,

portions break off and their fragments are shattered almost into dust before they come to rest many hundreds of feet below. These avalanches, as they are commonly but not quite accurately called, fall frequently during the summer months, sometimes several in a day.

36 On an Alpine pasture, at such a height above the sea as the Wengen Alp, the aconite and other early flowers continue to blossom till late in the summer.

The subject of the dramatic poem, *Empedocles on Etna*, is the death of the poet-philosopher Empedocles of Agrigento, who flourished about 450 B.C. Matthew Arnold represents him as 'the weary man, the banished citizen', wandering on the slopes of Etna, first with his friend Pausanias and then alone. His musings are, from time to time, interrupted by the singing of Callicles, a harp-player, who is trying, unseen, to distract Empedocles from his thoughts. These lovely lyrics fulfil one of the functions of the Chorus in a Greek play: they at once relieve and deepen the tragedy. The last scene takes place on the summit of Etna,—Empedocles, in a fit of despair, jumps into the crater, and the voice of Callicles is heard singing the song given here. Compare the ending of *Shahab and Rustum*, where the peace of Nature 'rounds' the human tragedy.

7 *Helicon* A range of mountains in Boeotia, sacred to Apollo and the Muses. See note on IV 137.

11 *Thesbe*, a town in Boeotia between Mt Helicon and the Corinthian Gulf.

30 *his choir* The nine Muses.

38 *the spring* The sacred well of Aganippe, on Mt Helicon.